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MIDDLEFORD HALL.

A TALE FOR CHILDREN.

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MIDDLEFORD HALL.

A TALE FOR CHILDREN.

EDITED BY THE AUTHOR OF "ELLERTON PRIORY;" "CLAIRE MAITLAND," &c.

"Be it a weakness, it deserves some praise,
We love the play-place of our early days;
The scene is touching, and the heart is stone,
That feels not at that sight, and feels at none.
* * * *
This fond attachment to the well-known place,
Whence first we started into life's long race,
Maintains its hold with such unfailing sway,
We feel it even in age, and at our latest day."

COWPER.

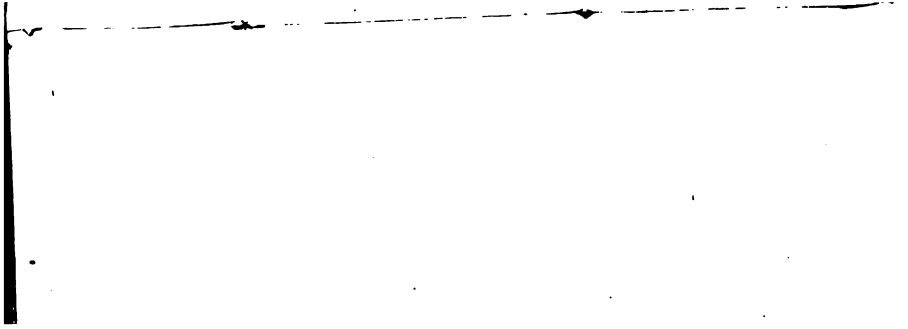
———:o:———

London:
THOMAS RICHARDSON AND SONS,
26, Paternoster Row; and Derby.
1877.

My dear Children,

This simple little tale was written, at the suggestion of a friend, during the long hours of convalescence that succeeded to a severe illness. It has no great literary merits; but if, by the perusal of its pages, some amongst you may be led to help God's poor for His own dear sake, and to feel a more grateful and affectionate reverence for your kind parents, who seek to secure to you a happy childhood, then the aim will be attained of your sincere friend and well wisher,

PHILORPHANOS.



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MIDDLEFORD HALL.

CHAPTER I.

HOME, SWEET HOME.

"Somewhat back from the village street
Stands the old-fashioned country seat;
Across its antique portico
Tall poplar trees their shadows throw;
And from its station in the hall
An ancient timepiece says to all,
'For ever—never!
Never—for ever!'

In that mansion used to be
Free-hearted Hospitality;
His great fires up the chimney roar'd,
The stranger feasted at his board;
But, like the skeleton at the feast,
That warning time-piece never ceased:
'For ever—never!
Never—for ever!'"—LONGFELLOW.

"Papa, dear papa, look! there's Middleford peeping through the trees; and now I see Grovewood, and the smoke, curling above the firs and oaks, from Mrs. Shepard's cottage. What fun we had last year, nutting and gipsying there! She's a cross old woman, though; I recollect how she scolded us

when we ran in among the trees, and disturbed the game. Oh, papa, how I long to go out shooting with you!"

These exclamations of delight were uttered by Augustus Tresham, a bright intelligent little boy of eleven years old. He was seated by his father on the box of a large travelling barouche, with four post horses, which, dashing quickly through the narrow lanes so common in some parts of Essex, now, by a sudden turn in the road, came in sight of the country seat which the family had left a few months previously for a visit to London.

It was a bright evening towards the middle of September, many years before the railroad or the electric telegraph had changed the aspect of the hills and dales and lovely nooks and corners of dear old England. Travelling in those days, though less rapid, was far more enjoyable than it is now. Young people of the present time can scarcely form an idea with what interest the then indispensable road-book was searched by tourists for the name of every town and village, or nobleman's seat, by which they passed. And, again, how delightful it was to stay a night or two in a strange town, to get up early and explore its streets and suburbs; to visit its cathedral, if it possessed one, its manufactories or curiosities, and afterwards to take notes of what they had seen or heard, to be read over by the fireside on winter evenings.

On the day in question, however, the journey was

scarcely twenty-four miles, and had not been commenced until after the early nursery dinner at one o'clock.

As they drove past the village Green, the cottagers, tenants of Mr. Tresham, eagerly ran out to welcome them on their return. Every bow and courtesy was kindly acknowledged by a wave of the hand, or a smile of recognition, while the new baby was held up to the carriage window by Mrs. Tresham, who fully appreciated the blessings which she well knew her darling would receive from the grateful and loving poor.

In a few minutes the carriage stopped at the hall door, where they were met and heartily welcomed by the few servants who had been left in charge of the house. Kitty the laundry maid, and Betsey the housemaid, caught the younger children in their arms, and carried them across the hall and up the stairs, to the large and comfortable nursery, where tea was prepared; and long before the stately nurse arrived with her precious burden, followed by Teresa the nursery maid carrying parcels and packages, the young ones had gone deep into a large plate of bread and butter, and were eagerly inquiring after their numerous pets.

The chickens had grown into hens; some of the white rabbits had died; a few of the fancy pigeons had been stolen. There were eight bantams, and lots of young turkeys. The canary sang better than ever, and the bullfinch piped admirably. Spot,

Lion, and Fido, were all well; and as for Mungo, the black pony, he had been turned out to grass, and had grown so fat they would hardly know him.

"And the gardens?" asked Beatrice.

"Oh, the gardens were in excellent order; the cold weather at the beginning of the month had injured some of the summer flowers, but the asters and dahlias were in full blossom. Dick, the gardener's boy, had tended them well, and seemed ever so proud of the order in which the little ladies would find them on their return to Middleford."

"Then he shall have the suit of clothes that we bought in town for the best boy in the village," cried little Marion, clapping her hands. "I hope it will fit him, though; but if not, I am sure mamma will give him something else to reward him for the care he has taken of our dear little gardens. Oh, how I long for to-morrow, to see them again!"

"When the boxes are unpacked, Kitty, we must show you our new dolls," said Beatrice, a beautiful fairy-looking child, with dark curly hair and sparkling brown eyes; "mine was a present from Lady Springfield to Margaret, who is her Godchild; but you know she never plays with dolls, so she gave it to me. It opens and shuts its eyes; and if you raise one arm it says 'Papa,' and when you raise the other it says 'Mamma.' Oh, it is such a beauty!"

"Have you got a cradle for it, miss?" asked Betsey.

"*Oh, no,*" said Marion, with just the very slight-

est sigh. "We might have bought one, though, but," she added, hesitatingly, "we preferred something else, so we had no money left for the cradle, and we are very glad now that we did not get one, for our dolls will sleep just as well in baby's rocking chair."

"I'll tell you how it was, Betsey," interrupted Beatrice. "Just when we were starting to get the cradle, we met Edward on the stairs, who told us he was going out with mamma to buy some presents for the poor people on the Green; and that reminded us of our promise to old Mrs. Skiggs to bring her a nice warm gown for the winter. We could not break our word, you know; besides, Edward said we could do without the cradle much better than Mrs. Skiggs could do without the dress, so we asked Smeakle not to take us to the large toyshop in the Edgeware Road, but to a draper's instead, and there she helped us to choose a warm merino gown. When we showed it to papa and mamma they said we had done right, and that God would reward our little sacrifice."

"Yes, miss, that He will, and sooner than you expect, perhaps," said Kitty, giving a significant glance at her fellow servant.

"And now, dear children," said Mrs. Smeakle, the head nurse, who had entered the room a few minutes before; "go down and say good night to your papa and mamma. But do not stay long," she added, looking at Marion's already half-closed eyes, "for we must say prayers and go to bed early to-night."

CHAPTER II.

BLIND TOMMY.

"He ne'er had seen one earthly sight;
The sun, the day, the stars, the night;
Or tree, or butterfly, or flower;
Or fish in stream, or bird in bower;
Or woman, man, or child.

And yet he neither drooped nor pined,
Nor had a melancholy mind;
For God took pity on the boy,
And was his friend; and gave him joy,
Of which we nothing know."

WORDSWORTH.

Middleford Hall was pleasantly situated in beautiful grounds, where there was variety sufficient to please a more fastidious taste than that of the young Treshams, who were never tired of gambolling on the lawn, or cantering round it on their favourite pony.

They loved, too, the more secluded shrubbery, with its pond and little island, the boat and the boat house, which last was formed of rocks, and lined with fine large shells. Near the water's edge there was a summer house, built in the form of a Grecian temple, where they used to sit and watch the swans in the water, and feed those beautiful birds with *bread or biscuit.*

Beyond was a rookery, separated from the shrubbery by a little winding brook, over which was a pretty rustic bridge. A gateway, named Westminster Abbey, from the fact of its having been built of stone from that celebrated edifice, led out into the lower part of what was termed the park, though, strictly speaking, it was not a park, but a prettily wooded field. Here were plantations and paddocks, with hills and vales, where the children used to play at hide and seek, or fox and hounds; and often in the spring time they would return home with their pinafores laden with cowslips, of which balls were made after tea.

At the time when our tale commences, Augustus, the eldest boy, was eleven years old, and his brother Edward ten. They had been placed the year before at a preparatory school in Devonshire, under the care of the Reverend George Strangeman; but his sudden death occurring during the midsummer vacation, the school was broken up; and as Mr. Tresham considered his sons too young for college, he determined to keep them at home for one year, during which time he would instruct them himself.

Margaret, the eldest girl, was a giddy impetuous child, one year younger than Edward. She loved her brothers intensely, and their sports and pastimes far better than her doll or her needle; whenever, therefore, she could escape from the nursery, and have a good game of romps with Augustus or Edward, she never neglected the opportunity; leaving

playing at gentlemen and ladies, and doll's parties, to her more gentle little sisters, Beatrice and Marion, whose ages were seven and four.

Aloysius, the baby brother, was the idol of the whole family, and was already beginning to take great notice. He had a profusion of light curly hair, a high forehead, and laughing blue eyes, and no one disputed with Mrs. Smeakle that he was the sweetest baby in the world.

The morning after their arrival, the two boys, in great spirits, entered the breakfast room, where Mrs. Tresham was making tea.

"Oh, mamma," cried Edward, "we have been in the garden, the shrubbery, and in so many places already, I hardly know where we have not been; we met old Mrs. Skiggs picking up sticks, and we told her we would get some more for her in the afternoon, and put them under one of the old oak trees, as we did last year, so that she can find them without trouble."

"God bless my dear boys," said Mrs. Tresham, kissing them both. "Yes, now we must make up for our long absence from home by helping our poor people as much as we can; and old Mrs. Skiggs is really an object of charity."

At this moment Mr. Tresham entered the room, and after the usual morning greetings, told his boys that for the rest of the week they might amuse themselves as they pleased.

"Holidays till Monday," cried Augustus; "how jolly! Where shall we go to, Ned?"

"I am going to have a shot at the partridges," said Mr. Tresham, "and if you like to come with me, you may do so. I shall be ready at half-past ten."

"Glorious fun!" said Neddie, attacking his breakfast in true schoolboy style. "Oh, who would stop in smoky old London if he could help it? I, for one, am heartily glad to have made my escape."

Shortly after breakfast Mrs. Tresham went to the nursery, where, to her surprise, she found Margaret in tears. It was an unusual occurrence, and her mother looked inquiringly at the nurse.

"Master Tresham came in for a minute, ma'am," said Smeakle, "and told us that he and Master Edward were going out shooting with their papa. Miss Margaret wants to go with them; but I thought you would not approve of it, so I said she had better remain here until we go out, unless you were to send for her."

"You did quite right, Smeakle," said Mrs. Tresham. "Why, Margaret," she continued, taking a chair, and drawing the little girl towards her; "you cannot expect to be always with your brothers now, just as much as when they were quite little boys."

"I hate dolls, and I can't play all alone," said Margaret, pettishly.

"But you have your story books; and when Gus-

sie and Neddie are in the garden, or shooting at the target, you can be with them; but shooting with guns, dogs, and men, is quite a different thing, and not at all an amusement for a little girl."

"I wish I was a school-boy," sobbed Margaret, throwing her arms round her mother's neck.

"Well, Maggie, now you really are unreasonable," said Mrs. Tresham, who could not help smiling at the earnestness of manner with which the wish was expressed. "I came to the nursery expecting to find you all so happy, and I had planned to make you and Beatrice my little companions in my visits to the poor people; but if—"

"Oh, mamma," said Margaret, interrupting her, and smiling through her tears, "I really should like that very, very much."

"Well, then, ask Teresa to give you your hats and cloaks, and you will find me in the drawing room in a quarter of an hour. And perhaps, Smeakle, a little later you could take baby to see Mrs. Carter, and we will meet you there about twelve o'clock. But what does my little Marion say? Would she be tired if she comes with mamma and sisters, or will she go later with Ally?".

"Oh, I should like so much to go with you, dear *nittle* mamma," said Marion, putting up her round merry face to be kissed. The child could not speak very plainly, and whenever she wanted to express her love for her parents, she used to say "dear *nittle*

papa, dear *nittle* mamma," and throw her fat arms round their necks.

Although Mrs. Tresham did not confine her visits of charity to the twelve or fifteen families on the Green, yet as these were all tenants of her husband, and lived so near to the house, they were the special objects of her care. At the time appointed, the party set out, laden with little presents from London.

"For whom is my parcel?" inquired Beatrice, as she skipped along the road.

"It is for poor Mrs. James, and in it there is a good strong knife for blind Tommy; he needs one for cutting the osiers, and I noticed before we left home that his old one was nearly worn out."

Now this poor blind Tommy was the eldest son of a most afflicted family named James. The mother was quite a cripple; the daughter was lame; one son was stone deaf, and the eldest totally blind. Mrs. Tresham had placed him some years before at an asylum, where he had been taught to make baskets, and other useful objects in wicker work, thus procuring him a means of subsistence, and since his return home all the baskets wanted at the hall had been purchased of blind Tommy, whose gratitude to his benefactress was unbounded.

An amusing story is told of old James, the father. He had a very large head, and was the dullest lad in the parish: no amount of *larning* could knock anything into this big head. But one day, so the legend says, he was run over by a cart, which

cracked his skull and squeezed out some of his brains, which the doctor was popularly related to have scraped off with a teaspoon; after which no boy in the village could come near him in *book-larning*. It was believed that he had had too much brain, and that the cart wheel had relieved him of the superfluity! His cottage was one of the first on the Green, and as Mrs. Tresham and the children approached, they saw the blind boy at his work outside the door, singing merrily as usual.

"Good morning, Tommy," said Mrs. Tresham; "I am glad to see you so well, and so happily employed."

"Thank ye, mum. I hopes as you and the ladies bees all hearty," replied Tommy, as he rose and begged them to walk in and see his mother.

Mrs. Tresham entered the little kitchen, and after inquiring in the kindest manner after Mrs. James's health, and that of her husband and children, opened her parcel, which contained various articles of warm clothing.

The English poor are not demonstrative, but the "Thank ye, kindly, mum, I'm sure," with the low courtesy, or bob of the head, and sometimes the tear in the eye, speaks—to those who understand their character—of deep gratitude and feeling, which they simply have not the power to express.

But gratitude was not what Mrs. Tresham looked for. She was one of those unselfish noble-minded *women*, who do good from the purest and highest

motives, and she instilled these sentiments into the minds of her children more by example than by words. While she was talking to Mrs. James, Tommy came in, bringing with him a large parcel, which, after feeling about for the table, he placed upon it; and when he had taken off the brown paper in which it was packed, there appeared to the admiring view of the children, a beautiful doll's cradle, made of white and coloured osiers.

"If you please, ma'am," said Tommy, looking very awkward, "if so be as I may take the liberty of giving this here cradle to the young ladies I'd be very much obleeged to ye. It's the first as ever I made, and I wanted 'em to have it, if you please, ma'am."

"He's worked at it while you's all been away," put in his mother; "and he's laid awake monny a night a thinking on't, not knowing as whether he might be so bold as to ask your acceptance on't, mum."

"It is a very kind thought of yours, Tommy," said Mrs. Tresham, "and I have great pleasure in accepting the cradle for my little girls, who have been wishing for one for a long time."

During this conversation the children were examining the cradle in ecstasies of delight, and now poured forth their thanks to Tommy, who stood there, looking the very picture of confusion.

"Please ye, then," said he, "Jim will run up to the hall with it, and it shall be there before yees."

But the little girls did not please to part with their treasure, and after thanking him again and again, they left the cottage, Beatrice and Marion carrying the cradle between them.

"Mamma," whispered Margaret as they went out, "have you forgotten the five shillings you said you were going to give to Tommy to buy some osiers?"

"No, dear, I have not forgotten it; but if I were to give it now, Tommy might think it was offered in payment for his pretty gift, and that would hurt his feelings, poor boy; but I will give it to him another time."

The next cottage was old Sally Dasher's. She was a widow without children, and managed to keep herself out of the workhouse by means of a small shop. Small indeed it was, her stock consisting generally of about a dozen smoked herrings, a few equally smoked apples, half a dozen pipes, a little tobacco and snuff, and a bottle full of most uninviting pink and white sugar balls, that she called suck.

Sally had not the best of tempers, poor soul, and once, when Augustus and Edward, partly for fun and partly for charity, bought every single thing she had in the shop, she was not by any means pleased, and they never ventured to do the same again.

She liked well enough, though, to have her little stock increased; and when Mrs. Tresham took from the basket several bags of cakes, and sugar plums of various kinds, that she had brought from London,

the old woman grinned with pleasure, and expressed her thanks most gratefully.

After visiting two or three other poor families, including Mrs. Skiggs, who was delighted with the merino dress, to buy which the cradle had been sacrificed, the great stable clock struck twelve, so, Mrs. Tresham thinking it better to defer the remainder of her calls until another day, they crossed the Green, and proceeded towards the farm which was rented by Mr. Carter. He and his wife were of the good old-fashioned sort, open-hearted, kind, and hospitable. They had no family, but Mrs. Carter was very fond of children, and the young people at Middleford Hall, with whom she was a great favourite, knew very well that they were always welcome at Woodley Farm. Smeakle was her bosom friend, and her respect for Mr. and Mrs. Tresham was of no common kind.

On entering the house they found that the nurse and baby had arrived, and the latter had been duly admired, and declared to be the living image of his father. Mrs. Carter, after welcoming Mrs. Tresham and the children, and answering the questions of the former regarding the harvest and other farm details, placed before them a bottle of home-made currant wine, which she so pressed them to taste with some loaf cake that there was no refusing her. Needless to say, it was found excellent, and after inviting Mrs. Carter to spend the afternoon in the nursery on the the following Monday, the little party took their leave.

"Did you know, mamma, that Tommy was making a cradle for us, when you said that God would reward our little sacrifice?" inquired Beatrice, as they entered the park gates.

"No, dear, I knew nothing of it; but I know that God is so good that He always does reward the least little thing done for His sake: if not in this world, He will in the next, for He has promised it, and He is truth itself."

"Then it was God's own thought," the child said, musingly. "How good He is! I love Him more and more."

CHAPTER III.

THE ABBE LAURENT.

"Faith of our fathers! living still,
In spite of dungeon, fire, and sword;
Oh! how our hearts beat high with joy
Whene'er we hear that glorious word.
Faith of our fathers! holy Faith!
We will be true to thee till death."

FABER.

The gardens had been visited and admired; Dick had been rewarded; the pets had all been looked after and fed; every hole and corner of the house and grounds had been run over; and the remainder of the poor people had been called upon. Now the

week was drawing to a close, and there was no little excitement among the children, caused by the expected arrival of the priest who was to be the chaplain during the ensuing winter.

Catholic churches in England have, by the blessing of God, greatly increased in number since the time when the events recorded in this little tale occurred. Middleford was at that time at least fifteen miles from any chapel, and the clergy were so few that the bishop seldom could spare a priest to remain there altogether, so he generally appointed one to go every Friday, and stay until Monday morning. The Reverend Mr. Stonely had, up to the present time, been Mr. Tresham's chaplain, but he had just been named to a large mission, and the Abbé Laurent was expected to take his place.

Prevented by the terrible French revolution from performing their clerical duties, obliged to hide and disguise their sacred character, hunted as our own priests were hunted under Elizabeth, many of France's noblest clergy sought an asylum on our English soil; and afterwards, when peace and religion were restored, some there were who generously resolved to devote their lives and energies to assist, and lead to the only true faith, the people who had so hospitably received them. The good Abbé Laurent was of this number, but the great difficulty he had in mastering the English language prevented his being employed in preaching or instructing the people.

He arrived at Middleford about four o'clock in the afternoon, and when the little girls went down to dessert, they were introduced to the good father. He was a remarkably tall and venerable looking old man, past sixty, with white silvery hair. He loved children dearly, and this they quickly discovered. At first they were timid, but his benevolent smile, and the evident pleasure he felt in seeing them, gave the little ones courage, so that very soon they felt quite at home, and even Margaret, who was so shy in the presence of strangers, at last consented to join her sisters in singing "The Swiss Boy," and "I'd be a butterfly," for his entertainment, provided she sat on papa's knee during the performance.

Then the Abbé sang funny French songs, which caused the greatest amusement, especially as he acted a little while he was singing. One song was about a cobbler's daughter who was going to be married, and another was about a sailor who had been shipwrecked. The children were delighted, and when they said good night, he told them that during the revolution, many priests had been obliged to work in disguise, at various trades and other employments, in order to support themselves, as it would not have been safe to return to their families; that for his part he had engaged himself to a carpenter, and had got quite expert in the trade, therefore, whenever they had any broken toys they must bring them to him, and he would have great pleasure in *mending* them. This kind offer being interpreted into

English for them by Mr. Tresham, was thankfully accepted, and afterwards was often largely profited of. The Abbé was ever a welcome visitor to the nursery, and months afterwards, when little Aloysius could speak, if he broke anything, whether it was the head of a harlequin, the parchment of a drum, the handle of a teacup, no matter what, even if he cut his own tiny finger, or fell down and hurt his knee, he would cry out, "Laurent men' it, Laurent, men' it." Often, too, the good priest would meet the children in their walks, and question them in order to learn the names of various objects in English.

"What dat?" said he to Marion, the morning after his arrival.

"A cow," said the little girl, looking up in astonishment at his supposed ignorance, for she did not understand that he spoke another language.

"What dat?"

"Oh, that's grass."

"What dat?"

"A horse."

"What dat?"

"Gravel," said the wondering child, who then ran away to tell mamma that the Abbé knew nothing at all, any more than baby.

There were no Catholics for miles round Middleford, and such was the ignorance of the people, that when Mr. Tresham first purchased the estate, and it was discovered that he did not attend the parish

church of either Great or Little Middleford, they came to the immediate conclusion that he must be a Jew, and that he had a synagogue in the house.

Prejudice, to a certain extent, wore off; but the family had lived there for many years before a single soul, excepting themselves and their visitors, had ventured into the pretty cruciform chapel, which the former proprietor had made use of as a library.

Mrs. Tresham acted as sacristan, and during the afternoon of Saturday the children were employed in assisting her, and in searching the garden through for the prettiest flowers of the season, with which to adorn the altar.

Augustus and Edward were the acolyths. From the age of five years, Mr. Tresham had taught them to serve at Mass; it was their greatest joy and privilege, and they took pains to do it well. Father O'Leary, a priest who once happened to supply for the Rev. Mr. Stonely, was so pleased to see such little boys serving at the altar, that before he came into the breakfast room he composed the following lines, which he presented, with tears in his eyes, to Mr. Tresham.

"Great God! Thou now art truly served
In spotless purity,
By those whose feet have never swerved
From innocence and Thee.

No guardian seraphs need attend,
To waft such prayers above;
Like incense must those prayers ascend
Before Thy throne of love.

O! 'tis a soothing sight to see,
In a world so cold and chill,
Two hearts, from guile and falsehood free,
Fulfilling thus Thy will.

May they, O God, pursue the way
They now are taught to tread;
Nor from its peaceful pleasures stray,
When childhood's days have fled:

But may through life their prayer still prove,
As now, thus pure to be,
Till called to praise Thy name above,
They sigh their souls to Thee."

How often did these holy parents, when looking on their little sons in the sanctuary, earnestly ask of God that they might spend their lives in His service. Was that wish accomplished? Was that prayer heard and granted? God knows that it was.

A little anecdote must not be omitted here, as it may amuse my young readers. Mr. Frederick Dudley, uncle to the children on their mother's side, was a barrister; he often spent a part of his long vacation at Middleford, and took a great interest in all his little nephews and nieces, but he never

omitted to point out to the young acolyths the very slightest imperfections he observed in their manner of serving at Mass.

Now, as for some two or three years after they had commenced their duties in the sanctuary, they were not tall enough to reach the book stand, the Missal was removed from the Epistle to the Gospel side by the celebrant, and Uncle Frederick did not fail to tease the little boys about it. This roused their spirit, and put them on their mettle; so, accordingly, the next time it was announced that he was coming to spend a few weeks at Middleford, they consulted together as to what plan they could adopt, in order to be able to remove the book themselves.

The result of their deliberations (which they kept a profound secret, for fear of opposition) was, that they were to bring into the sanctuary a small footstool, and place it on the carpet on the Epistle side of the Altar. Augustus was to stand upon it, to reach the Missal and give it to Neddie, who was to hold it until his brother had placed the stool on the Gospel side, when he would climb on it again, take the book and once more place it on the Altar.

Uncle Frederick arrived,—Sunday came,—Mass began, and, the two little boys, in snow-white surplices, took their places in the sanctuary. The Gradual and Alleluias were recited; the unsuspecting Mr. Stonely was devoutly bowing his head in *prayer before* reading the Gospel, when Augustus

stepped noiselessly on to the footstool, and Neddie stood beside him.

Presently, to the dismay of the congregation, and still more of the good father, a loud noise was heard. Alas! poor little acolyths! In moving the book, Gussie, in his anxiety, missed his footing, fell over his brother, and the pair came suddenly to the ground with a crash, book and book-stand tumbling over them. James, the footman, rushed into the sanctuary and quickly put all to rights, and the priest went gravely on with the Mass; but, at its conclusion, instead of running as usual into the breakfast-room to say good morning, the little fellows retired quietly into the nursery to hide their diminished heads. There Mrs. Tresham found them, and, learning the cause of the disaster, told them they must never attempt to do anything of the kind again, as it distracted everybody; and they assured her they never would.

When Mr. Tresham and Uncle Fred were told of the plan and its cause, they laughed heartily.

"It was your fault, Dudley," said Mr. Tresham, "for you have teased them unmercifully about not being tall enough to reach the Missal, so you really must not laugh when they make their appearance."

"Well, well, I'll try not," said he. Nevertheless, when he took his place at the luncheon table, opposite to his little nephews, who dined at the same time, he suddenly got a great fit of coughing and sneezing, and several times during the meal (for

some unaccountable reason, of course) he stuffed his handkerchief into his mouth, greatly to the poor boys' discomfiture.

CHAPTER IV.

COUNTRY PURSUITS.

"Child of the country! on the lawn
I see thee like the bounding fawn,
Blithe as the bird which tries its wing
The first time on the wings of spring;
Bright as the sun when, from a cloud,
He comes as cocks are crowing loud;
Now running, shouting mid sunbeams,
Now groping trouts in lucid streams;
Now spinning like a windmill round,
Now hunting echo's empty sound;
Now climbing up some old tall tree
For climbing sake—'tis sweet to thee
To sit where birds can sit alone,
Or share with thee thy venturous throne."

ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

"Here's an apple, and there's another," cried Beatrice.

"There's another, and there are ever so many more," screamed Margaret, as the children darted from tree to tree in the orchard, picking up the apples that had fallen on the ground, and putting them into their baskets.

"What a glorious wind there must have been last

night!" exclaimed Augustus. "We shall all fill our baskets to-day."

"And we might have filled them twice over," said Margaret, "if Thomas had not been before us. I saw him from the schoolroom window while we were all at our lessons, with papa and mamma, coming in with barrows full of apples; it was no use trying to learn after that, so," added she, somewhat dismally, "I shall have to repeat my catechism and multiplication table, before I go to bed to-night."

"Well, never mind, Maggie," said her brother, "I'll help you to knock it into your head by and by; but," he added, turning to the gardener, "Thomas, you must only gather in the apples that are on the trees, not those that are under them, for papa told us that all the fruit we find on the ground we may consider our property, to give away to the poor people in the village."

"But, really, sir," said Thomas, "I don't think as how master meant you to have all as falls after such a night as we've just had. Why, look at the trees, sir, there's hardly one on 'em now."

"But," said Edward, "papa did not say one word about our not having them all after a windy night."

"Perhaps papa meant it, though," said Mr. Tresham, who just then came up to the children. "Why," said he, laughing, "you will ruin me at this rate. Thomas, can you spare all they have already got in their baskets?"

"Well, yes sir, I think I can, if you wish it, for I

have already stored in several bushels, and there are the trees in the kitchen garden still loaded."

"That's right, Thomas," said Edward, "and to reward you, we will give your wife a double share."

"Very good," said Mr. Tresham, patting the curly head of his energetic little boy; "so off with you and Gussie to the Green with your wheelbarrow full, you will just have time before dinner; but remember to divide the apples fairly, as far as they will go, giving at least two dozen more to those who have large families, than to those who are only two or three in number, and begin with the third cottage, since you already took a basketful to the first and second last week."

"Papa," said Beatrice, when the boys had carried off the apples, "there are several walnuts and Spanish chestnuts under the trees, would these be of any use to the poor people?"

"Not of so much use as the apples, but they might take them to Hardale market, and get a little money for them, I dare say, so you may pick up what you find until they beat the trees; and you can keep a few chestnuts for yourselves, if you like, dear."

"Oh, very much indeed; thank you, papa: it is such fun roasting them in the nursery fire."

Mr. Tresham was the kindest and most considerate of landlords; often would he excuse a part, or even all the rent, if sickness had visited the family. *Often, too,* would Mrs. Tresham go the round of

the cottages when rent day approached, and inquire of each poor mother how many shillings were still needed to make up the sum, and then take out her own private purse and give the required amount; and seldom did she find her kindness imposed on.

Idleness, however, met with no encouragement, so old Burton and his two lazy sons, who never worked, and lived no one knew exactly how, did not of course partake of this liberality; but for the industrious struggling labourers, many and varied were the little plans formed by Mr. Tresham and his wife. In some of these schemes they liked their children to be sharers; they wished to teach them how, in the midst of the comforts of life, to feel for the wants of their poorer neighbours, to be unselfish, to exert themselves for the good of others, and to be less occupied with their own little troubles, in considering the far greater trials of those around them. Thus it was a happy life that the little Treshams led, for they entered, with a vigour that sometimes even required a check, into their good parents' views.

After dinner, the little girls prepared for the visit of their friend Mrs. Carter. The dolls were dressed in their best, the new story books and puzzle boxes were brought out, with various other toys, to show her; and a handsome work basket, which Mrs. Tresham had bought in London, and which was to be presented to Mrs. Carter, was given over to Smeakle's care. The maids were invited to meet

her at tea, so that Kitty and Betsey were of the party.

At four o'clock, the good farmer's wife arrived, and after taking off her large cloak and bonnet, went into the nursery, where, having examined and admired all the pretty things displayed before her, and thanked the children for the handsome presents they had bought her, she sat down, and, taking her huge muff, told Margaret to put her hand in on one side and draw something out, while Beatrice and Marion were to do the same on the other side. The little girls were all eagerness and excitement.

"Is there anything alive in it?" said Beatrice, putting her hand half in, and then drawing it out quickly.

"Oh, I guess it is a squirrel," said Margaret; "will it bite me?"

But no, it was no squirrel; and while they were wondering and trying to peep in, little Marion, the bravest of the three, thrust in her hand, and drew out a very nice little sack full of wheat; it was made of strong white calico, and in shape was just like a real sack, tied up at the opening, and a large M. R. T. was marked in black ink upon it. Then Beatrice and Margaret, taking courage, drew out a second and third sack, which were marked B. T. and M. T. The children danced with joy. Each of them had a flower garden, which they cultivated themselves, and in one corner of it they sowed mustard and cress, and radishes; but, to have a little

wheat field was something so novel, so delightful, that Mrs. Carter was in danger of being choked with the kisses which were the expression of their thanks.

Where to sow the grain was now the question.

"It would be so nice in front of the nursery windows, where we could see it, and watch it come up, even on wet days," said Marion.

But Mrs. Carter objected that a patch of wheat on a nicely mown lawn would not be a beauty spot.

"Far away, then," suggested Beatrice, "by the palings."

But Teresa, the nursery maid, thought that wheat would not grow well under the trees.

At this moment, and in this perplexity, a well-known knock was heard at the door. Mr. Tresham never let a day go by without paying a visit to his little ones; and as he had to pass the nursery on the way to his dressing room, it was usually when he went down to dinner that he made his welcome appearance. These visits were looked forward to by the children with eager joy, and even little Aloysius would struggle and crow in the nurse's arms, when papa's footstep was heard in the passage.

"Oh, how are you, Mrs. Carter? I am glad to see you," said he, in his own genial way.

The good woman rose on his entrance, but there was not much time for an exchange of civilities, before Beatrice held up before him the new treasures.

"Papa," said she, "look what Mrs. Carter has given us: three sacks of real wheat to sow ourselves,

if you will give us leave to do so, and show us where we may have our fields; for our flower gardens will be quite full in the spring, when it is time to sow the annuals."

"How kind of Mrs. Carter! And so you are going to become little farmers, are you? Well, I certainly must look out for a desirable spot for this newly acquired wealth," said he, smiling. "I fear it is too late this evening; but after breakfast to-morrow morning you may come with me, and we will see if a piece of ground cannot be spared for the purpose."

"Oh, thank you, papa," exclaimed Marion. "Smeakle will show us how to sow the wheat, for she knows all about that sort of thing; and Mrs. Carter will come and look how it is going on."

"And we will invite her to our harvest home, and our harvest supper," said Beatrice, dancing round the room in her glee; "and you and mamma will come too, won't you, papa? Oh, what fun we shall have! Gussie and Ned must compose some speeches, and then"—

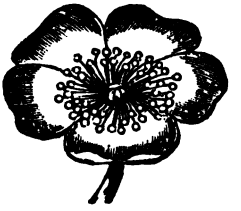
"And then, what is to become of the wheat?" interrupted Mr. Tresham, laughing.

"Oh," answered Margaret, "we must send that to the mill to be ground into flour. I wonder how much flour there will be, and how many loaves we shall get? Kitty will bake them for us, I know, and then we can give them away to any body, per-

haps to Mrs. Stapleton, who is so dreadfully poor, and has such a number of little ragged children."

And so in imagination the wheat was sown and reaped, thrashed and ground; the flour was baked into loaves, and the loaves were disposed of, before the dinner bell summoned Mr. Tresham to the drawing room.

That evening, after Mrs. Carter had taken her leave, and the children were with their parents, it was announced, to their infinite delight, that Marion's birthday, on the twenty-eighth, would be kept in Grove Wood. The plan was to spend the morning in nutting and cooking, and afterwards, as it was too late in the season to lunch out of doors, they were to take it in the pretty little room built and set apart for such purposes on one side of Mrs. Shepard's cottage. But a description of the birthday will be reserved for another chapter.



CHAPTER V.

THE WILD WOMAN OF THE WOODS.

"Her eyes are wild, her head is bare,
The sun has burnt her coal-black hair;
Her eyebrows have a rusty stain,
And she came far from over the main.
She has a baby on her arm,
Or else she were alone;
And underneath the hay-stack warm,
And on the green-wood stone,
She talked and sung the woods among,
And it was in the English tongue."

WORDSWORTH.

Thursday, the twenty-eighth of September, at length arrived. It was a bright fine day, and the children prepared to enjoy it thoroughly. They were up early, arranging little surprises for their youngest sister, who was a sweet-tempered child, and a pet and plaything with every one.

All the dolls' clothes had been washed by good-natured Kitty, and Beatrice dressed the three prettiest of them in their clean white frocks and blue sashes. Margaret, after some vain attempts to make a doll's apron, brought out from her own little treasures a puzzle box of the English kings. Smeakle had made a silk bonnet and cloak for the speaking

doll; and all these presents, with a wreath of flowers from mamma's own garden, Marion found at her place on the breakfast table, after prayers, on the happy morning when she entered her sixth year.

But the nursery was soon abandoned, for the children were sent for to the drawing room, where the little queen of the day received the affectionate congratulations of her parents, some more pretty presents, and a letter from grandmamma.

Smeakle had given strict injunctions that they were to return to the nursery, and change their frocks, before playing at being lost on a desert island; a recommendation which was certainly not altogether unnecessary.

"Miss Tresham's spirits are so far beyond her strength," she used to say, "and she really does rend and tear so, that it would take a fortune ten times as great as Mr. Tresham's, only to keep her in clothes."

But when the kind father heard of such speeches he only laughed, and said he would much rather pay for frocks than for medicine.

The children, however, had one objection to Grove Wood. Notwithstanding its delightful walks, its sweet wild flowers, its loaded filbert trees and blackberry bushes; notwithstanding its pretty Swiss-looking cottage at the far extremity, where clematis and jasmine climbed luxuriantly, with its nice little parlour adjoining, which, as we have already mentioned, was only used by the family at the hall on occasions like this, and which, by common consent,

went by the name of the Tea Room, still there was one reason why, when the children were trusted alone in the wood, as they sometimes were, they never went within at least a hundred yards of the said cottage. And the reason was this: they had an undefinable, indescribable awe, or rather terror, of its mistress, Mrs. Shepard.

Sometimes she was called Mrs. Jack Shepard, to distinguish her from Mrs. Thomas Shepard, the gardener's wife, but in general she went by the name of Mrs. Shepard of the Wood. Now Mrs. Tresham's brother, Mr. Frederick Dudley, as we observed before, was a frequent visitor at Middleford. Christmas would scarcely have been considered Christmas without him. He had travelled a great deal; and in the long evenings he used to sit in an arm chair by the fireside, and tell the children of his adventures. Sometimes, too, he related fairy tales of wild men of the woods; and somehow or another they began to imagine that Mrs. Shepard was a wild woman of the woods; and though, at the time of which we are now writing, some of the elder ones had got a little more common sense upon the subject, yet Marion, and perhaps Beatrice and Margaret too, though they were ashamed to acknowledge it, feared the good dame as much as if she had been an ogress. She was a tall, masculine-looking woman, supposed to have been of gipsy origin, with a brown, swarthy face, high cheek bones, and long black hair, which fell unkempt over her shoulders; and she was

usually dressed in a short cotton gown, which displayed such a remarkable pair of clean white stockings, that they could be seen from the nursery windows when she was in the road.

Once, in the spring time, when the pheasants and partridges were sitting, the children went into the Grove to gather blue and white violets. They had not been there long before Neddie unluckily trespassed a few steps beyond the green walk, in order to reach some daffodils that were growing there. Instantly the terrible figure appeared. There she stood before them, her sleeves tucked up above her bony elbows, while, in her broad dialect, and with a voice of thunder and clenched fist, she roared out, "If yow gees in there, Marster Edward, Oi'll sarve ye as Oi did moy little Jim."

It was not difficult to guess how she had *sarved* her little Jim; but though she would not have dared to put her threat into execution, and would perhaps have found the high-spirited boy a match for her if she had attempted it, nevertheless, without an escort, the precincts of the cottage were carefully avoided from that time.

At ten o'clock the little party set out, accompanied by Teresa the nursery maid, who led Jenny the donkey. The latter was loaded with provisions for the desert island. In one pannier there were mutton chops cut ready for broiling, cold chicken, potatoes to bake in the embers, wine, bread, and various other good things; the other pannier con-

tained a gridiron, plates, knives, forks, glasses, spoons, and things of that sort.

Papa and mamma promised to come later on, and join them at the lunch, which was to be of their own cooking.

They spent some time in gathering nuts and blackberries, while Teresa, who was young, and enjoyed a holiday as much as her young charge, unloaded the donkey, and took the table-cloth and other requisites to the Tea Room.

Soon after eleven they began to gather sticks, while Teresa made the fire, and guarded the frocks from the flames. While the chops were broiling and spirting, potatoes were put in the embers to bake, and nothing, they thought, damped the perfect enjoyment of the birthday, but the reflection that, however much it might look like it, it was not really a desert island, and that they would have to return to civilized life in the evening.

When the meat and potatoes were cooked, the party proceeded to the Tea Room, which had a private entrance, and on the outside there was a pretty verandah with rustic seats; there they sat down to rest after their labours, while Teresa laid the cloth and prepared for lunch. They would not have it called dinner on any account, for, as was usual on birthdays, they were to dine late with their parents. At length the clock struck a quarter to one, and to their surprise no papa or mamma had *as yet arrived.*

"Some tiresome ladies and gentlemen have come, I'm sure," said Beatrice; "I heard a carriage on the road a few minutes ago."

"I hope mamma will not bring them here, that's all I can say," said Augustus; "but in case she should, I'll be off. Come, Ned, let's try who'll be first at the top of those fir trees."

"Oh, do take me with you," cried Margaret; "I can't stay here to meet company, I never know what to say: besides, I'm in such a plight."

"Don't leave us alone with Mrs. Shepard of the Wood," implored little Marion, looking pitifully up at her sister. Margaret recollected that she had been told not to attempt climbing, so she promised the child she would stay with her, and Beatrice ran down the green walk to see if papa and mamma were coming.

Soon, however, she returned in breathless haste. "They are not in sight," said she, "but there is an officer in full uniform coming slowly up to us: he is leaning on a stick, and his face is bandaged up: perhaps he is a soldier who fought at Waterloo."

Now the great battle, after which Napoleon the First surrendered to the English, had occurred not very many years before, and the children had heard it frequently spoken of. Mr. Carter's fierce bull dog was called Blucher, after the Prussian general, who brought up his army to assist the English. Papa had Wellington boots; the ribbon that trimmed their garden hats was called Waterloo blue; and Beatrice's

one desire was to see the great duke, of whose mighty achievements she had heard so much. When in London she was always hoping to meet him, and expected to see him amongst every troop of mounted guards that passed.

"Perhaps it is the Duke of Wellington himself," she said; but neither she nor her sisters had any mind to encounter him when they were all alone. They had not forgotten the nursery rhyme, which Smeakle used to repeat to them for their amusement, and which gave them a sort of half dread of their hero.

"Baby, baby, naughty baby,
Hush, you squalling thing, I say;
Peace this moment! peace, or may-be
Wellington will pass this way.

Baby, baby, he's a giant
Tall and black as Rouen steeple;
Breakfasts, dines, and sups, rely on't,
Every day on naughty people.

Baby, baby, if he hear you,
As he gallops by the house,
Limb from limb he'll surely tear you,
Just as pussy tears a mouse.

And he'll beat you, beat you, beat you,
And he'll beat you all to pap,
And he'll eat you, eat you, eat you,
Gobble you, gobble you, snap, snap, snap!"

Teresa had just gone to the spot where they had made the fire, to look for the gridiron, so the poor little girls considered their case a desperate one: the unknown soldier in front, and the wild woman of the woods in the rear.

Meanwhile the officer approached. A silk handkerchief almost entirely covered his face, and he walked very lame.

"What shall we do?" said Beatrice; and she called as loudly as she could for Augustus and Edward, but no brothers answered.

"I can't go and speak to him, that's one good thing," said Margaret, "for I have just torn a breadth nearly out of my frock, and must get it mended when Teresa comes back."

"And my pinafore is all stained with the juice of the blackberries," said Beatrice. "Marion, you are the tidiest, I'll stand close behind you, if you will only speak."

"What shall I say?"

"Ask him if he was wounded at the battle of Waterloo."

"Water what?" said Marion, who hardly knew whether to laugh or to cry at this unexpected episode in her birthday feast.

But the stranger appeared distressed at their embarrassment, and, taking a piece of paper from his waistcoat pocket, he wrote on it with a pencil, and then offered it to Margaret, who read the contents, which were as follows:—

"Will you allow me to sit down and rest myself? I am tired and hungry, and would like to partake of the meal which I see you are preparing."

"I am sorry, sir," said Margaret, hesitating, "but we are not allowed to stop and talk to strangers when we are alone; but if you will sit down on this chair," she continued, lifting one of the wooden chairs from the verandah on to the grass plot in front, "I dare say papa and mamma will be here directly, for we are waiting lunch for them."

Beatrice longed to ask the stranger to tell them who he was, and all about the battles in which he had been engaged; and she thought every minute an hour during the absence of her parents. At length Mrs. Tresham appeared in sight, and Marion ran to tell her of the event.

But what was the surprise of all the children, when, on approaching the stranger, Mrs. Tresham exclaimed: "Oh! how do you do, your Grace? I am so glad to see you. Allow me to introduce my children to you."

Poor Margaret wished the earth to open and swallow her up.

"What had she done?" she thought to herself. "Her mother had addressed the officer as His Grace. Then he must be the Duke of Wellington, and she had not even invited him to step on to the verandah, but had only given him a wooden chair outside on the grass. How strange that he should have come *into the wood* alone, before calling at the house.

Perhaps he had called, and perhaps papa had told him of their great curiosity to see the Duke, and so he had set off by himself to surprise them. What a very kind and condescending man he must be!"

While all these thoughts were passing through her mind, Mrs. Tresham conducted him into the tea-room, to their great relief, for Gussie and Ned, from their lofty heights in the trees, were throwing down fir cones at their feet, and they were terrified lest one should fall on the General's poor wounded face.

"You seem very tired," said Beatrice, taking courage, and offering him a chair; "papa will be here directly, and then will you tell us how you got those dreadful cuts? Oh! but I forgot," she added, "it will hurt you to speak, so pray don't."

"During this interval, Marion was watching the stranger closely. When she saw him stroke Beatrice's flowing curls, she fixed her eyes on the ring on his finger; and when (unconsciously it must be owned,) he took out his silver snuff-box, she gave a shout and a spring, and, to the amazement of her sisters, who thought that her enthusiasm on seeing the Duke for the first time had driven away her senses, threw herself upon his neck.

The supposed duke caught the child in his arms, ran out of the cottage, across the verandah, and down the green walk, as nimbly as possible.

Marion looked over his shoulder, and called out, "It is papa! it is papa!" Then the two boys, who had kept aloof because they were in the secret, and

were afraid of betraying it, joined Margaret and Beatrice, and they all ran after the "duke," making the old wood ring with their merry laughter.

And where was the wild woman of the woods all this time? She had been watching, during the whole morning, by the cradle of her sick baby, with that intense anxiety a mother's heart alone can know. Her boy Jim had just returned from the big house, where she had sent him to beg a little milk of Mrs. Thomas, the housekeeper, for the doctor had told her, a short hour before, that the child's life depended on good nourishment; but when she heard the screams and shouts of laughter, she took them for cries of distress, and, going to the window, she saw a soldier running away with—stealing, she supposed—Miss Marion. Without a moment's hesitation, she snatched up a poker, and rushed out of the house. She left her infant to wail alone in its little cot, and the only drop of milk she had in the house to boil away as it might on the fire; for the Squire's child was in danger, and he and his lady had been kind to her and hers, so, heedless of all else, she ran down the walk. Teresa, returning with the gridiron, tried to stop her, but in vain,—on she went, her long black hair hanging in disorder over her shoulders.

"Papa! oh papa! Here comes the wild woman, running as fast as she can, with a poker in her hand," cried Beatrice, as the merry little party was returning to the cottage, "she will kill us; save me *from her*," said the child, clinging to her father.

The "wild woman" stood before them, but little did she think, when she saw the frightened looks of the children, that she herself was the object of their terror.

"Yow put that little gurl down at wunst, and take yourself off, or I'll have the whole village down upon ye," cried she, without giving herself time to look at Mr. Tresham, who had taken the bandage from his face. "How dare ye come and frighten the children in this way? The squire will be here his own self in a minute, and he'll prosecute you, he will, for he bees a magistrate, he bees."

"My good woman, you are mistaken, it is only a joke; I am not"—

"Laws a mussey me!" she interrupted. "Well I never! if you ain't the squire's own self, I do declare! I begs ye all ten thousand pardons, I'm sure I does. But leastways I really did think as how you was a rale sojer, stealing little miss, and that it was my bounden dooty to save her. I ask you a thousand pardons, that I does."

"No apology is needed, my good woman. You see we have been playing tricks this morning, but we did not mean to play one on you, and I am sorry it has caused you so much alarm. I shall not forget this proof of your kind care of my little girl."

"Don't mention it, sir. But now, if you'll excuse me, I'll run back to my child, who has been taken with convulsions that terrible as I doesn't like to leave her alone."

"I am so sorry to hear it. Go back to the poor little thing immediately, and I will look in myself in a few minutes, and see if we cannot do something for it."

But the poor creature did not hear the last part of the sentence, for she set off running back as fast as she had come.

"There's your wild woman! There's your terrible ogress, children," said Mr. Tresham, as Mrs. Shepard quickly disappeared. "There is one who has risked her own child's life, perhaps, to save one of you; will you ever be frightened of her again?"

"Never," said all the children in a breath.

"I'll never call her a wild woman again. I hope the baby won't die," said Marion, the tears falling fast down her cheeks.

"I hope not," said her father; "we'll do all we can to save it. But there is Teresa on the verandah, looking anxious lest the mutton chops should spoil, I suppose, so run and tell her we shall be ready for them in five minutes, while I go and speak to Mrs. Shepard."

Mr. Tresham found his wife in the little kitchen, with the baby in her arms. Hearing its piteous cry, she had gone to the door, and, finding it quite alone, remained with it till the mother's return, when Jim was called, and again despatched for milk and other requisites. Then, after arranging with Mrs. Shepard to send to the Hall for whatever she wanted, and *promising to* call again the next day, they returned to

the children, whose spirits quickly rose, when Mrs. Tresham pronounced it her decided opinion that the worst was over, and that the child would recover.

Marion had the place of honour by the "duke," and no little party was ever more merry. Never were mutton chops and potatoes more enjoyed. And after a great deal of laughing and guessing, it was discovered that papa had really been in the army for a short time, and was now dressed in his own old regimentals as an officer of the Blues.

After lunch a little stroll was taken, while Teresa had her dinner, and collected the plentiful remains for Mrs. Shepard. Then the plates, dishes, and other goods and chattels were placed on Jenny's back, and they all returned home.

Another agreeable surprise awaited them there, for who should they see, standing on the steps of the front door, but their lively fun-loving cousin Charles Powis. He was at a school in the neighbourhood, and having two play days at Michaelmas, got leave to spend them at Middleford. Charles Powis was a bright youth of fifteen, and though so much older than the Treshams, he joined in all their sports and games, and was a great favourite amongst them.

"There's Charles, I declare!" cried Augustus, and he and Edward ran to meet him.

"Who's that officer you've got there? And where's your father?" said he, when the boys came up.

"Oh! you'll meet him at dinner, I suppose," said Augustus, highly amused, as was also Neddie, that

their big cousin had been taken in as well as their little sisters.

"What are you laughing at, you rogues? Mischief, of course, as usual. Oh, I see," said he, as Mr. Tresham approached, "you thought I was taken in, did you?"

"Yes, and you *were* taken in," exclaimed Beatrice, to whom Edward had whispered what Charles had said; "so no one need laugh at us any more, since even you did not know papa at first."

"Well, I suppose for peace sake I must plead guilty," said Charles, laughing, as he shook hands with Mr. and Mrs. Tresham, and complimented the former on his very soldier-like appearance.

Charles Powis was an orphan. His mother was an aunt of Mr. Tresham's who had married a Protestant, and, as is unhappily but too often the case, from that date she neglected her religion, and suffered her children to be baptized in the Protestant church, without an effort to prevent it. On her deathbed she was seized with remorse, and asked for a priest, but her husband, a bitter enemy of our holy faith, refused to admit one into the house. Mr. Tresham remonstrated uselessly, the only favour he could obtain being that he himself might have a private interview with his aunt. But, alas! it was too late; when he arrived she was quite unconscious, and in the wild delirium of fever he heard her frequently call upon him to save her children from the *misery she had* brought upon herself. "If I had

been firm! If I had been firm," she wildly exclaimed, "but too late, too late." Then she opened her eyes, and fixed them on her nephew, seeming for a few moments to recognize him, and to recover consciousness. "Tell my boy," she said, "tell Charles, tell Maude, my darling, my only girl, that I ought to have been a Catholic, that they might have been Catholics too, if I had only been firm. Tell them to study the faith; teach it to them; tell them of my remorse, my bitter remorse. Where are they? Why are they not here?" Saying these words, she became again insensible; she had exhausted herself, her rallying powers were gone, and in less than half an hour she was dead.

Mr. Powis, who really loved his wife, was plunged in the deepest affliction, and, had he lived, would probably have made some concessions, but he caught the fever of which she died, and in three weeks he followed her to the grave.

The children were then placed under Protestant guardians. Maude went to reside with her father's married brother, and was being educated with his children, and Charles was sent to a school near Hardale. It was only a few miles from Middleford, and he was allowed to visit his cousins on condition that religion was not spoken of to him.

There was no lack of conversation at dinner. Charles, as usual, had plenty of anecdotes to relate of his school days, and of old Mr. Tweedle, of whom it has been said that he was such an advocate for the

rod that he never used the same one twice. The children, on their side, told him of all they had seen in London; of the wild beasts at Exeter Change and in the Zoological Gardens; of the elephant, on whose broad back they had ridden; of the laughing hyenas; of the monkeys and bears; and how they had enjoyed going to see these beasts at feeding time.

"Oh," said mischievous Charles in a low tone to Marion, "if you like seeing wild beasts, I'll show you a great bear and a little bear this very night, without taking the trouble of going to London."

"Where are they kept?" asked the child, opening wide her large blue eyes.

"Up in the sky."

"I do not know what you mean, but I know you are teazing me," she replied, laughing.

At this moment Charles's attention was called to something Mr. Tresham said, and Marion had no opportunity of getting an explanation until they left the dining room.

"Mamma," she then said, eagerly, "Charles has been telling me such ridiculous things; he says that there is a great bear and a little bear up in the sky. It can't be true, can it, mamma?"

"Charles is full of tricks," said Mrs. Tresham, smiling, "but he has not told an untruth. Names have been given to a great many of the stars that we see on fine nights. There are several groups of stars that are termed constellations, and one of these

is called the Great Bear, another the Little Bear, and so on."

"Is not the Great Bear sometimes called Charles's Wain, mamma?" inquired Margaret.

"Yes, you are right. Wain means waggon, and the principal stars of which this constellation is composed form the outline of a waggon, and the stars in front are sometimes called the horses. We cannot see the Great Bear from the drawing room windows, but Charles may take you to the billiard room, and show it to you."

"If all the stars were as large as the moon," said Beatrice, "how beautiful they would look."

"The stars are much larger than the moon, Trissey, but they are farther off, and that is the reason why they appear so much smaller."

"Then the sun must be very near the earth, for he looks so large, and gives so much heat."

"There you are wrong, dear. The sun is ninety-three millions of miles from the earth, whereas the moon is only two hundred thousand miles distant from us. The sun is a great deal larger than the moon, but not larger than many of the little stars, which appear small only because we are still farther from them than from the sun."

"As I am now five years old," said Marion, "may I not learn my lessons with sisters in the school room, and then I shall know all about the sun, moon, and stars, and lots of other things?"

"I think, Marion dear, you are not quite old

enough to study for three hours every morning; but I have had a little secret, which I may now tell you all. You remember our kind friend Mrs. Carrington, who lost her father last year?"

"Oh yes, mamma, and I love her so much."

"Well, she is coming to live with us in the spring, and she will help me to teach you; then, Marion, you may join your sisters in the school room. In the meantime you had better continue to read and write with Smeakle, who has really brought you on very nicely, and whenever you are puzzled about anything come and ask me, and I will explain it; you may learn a great deal in this way."

"How glad I am Mrs. Carrington is coming to live with us," exclaimed all the little girls in a breath.

"She is so full of fun, and is not at all stiff, like some grown-up people," said Beatrice. "This has really been a day of surprises, and this last is the best of all. Don't you remember, Maggie, how beautifully Mrs. Carrington paints and embroiders?"

"Yes, and she likes finding out new walks, and having adventures, and looking for wild flowers to examine in the microscope. I am so glad she is coming in the spring, when all the trees and plants begin to bud."

"I have proposed to my friend to come at Easter," said Mrs. Tresham. "But here is your father with the boys, so now you may ask Charles to show you the Great Bear."

"*Ah, Charles*, I know all about the Great Bear

now, and mamma says you may take us to the billiard room and show it to us, if you please."

"Very good; I am quite ready to exhibit my bears, but are you prepared to take a drive through space in my waggon?"

"We know all about your waggon, too," cried Beatrice, leading the way upstairs; "it is only another name for the Great Bear."

"Why is that star in the Little Bear called the Polar Star?" asked Edward, when Charles had pointed out the two constellations.

"Because," said he, "though not a star of first magnitude, it is the nearest star to the north pole visible to the eye without a telescope, and mariners are guided by it."

"I long to study astronomy," said Augustus. "Papa says he will take us out on fine nights, and show us all the constellations that are visible; I know a great many already."

"I hope papa will let us go out, too," said Beatrice, as they ran downstairs to tea.

CHAPTER VI.

LOBSPOUND.

"That mother's love, how sweet the name!
What was that mother's love?
The noblest, purest, tenderest flame,
That kindles from above
Within a heart of earthly mould
As much of heaven as heart can hold,
Nor through eternity grows cold:
This was that mother's love."

JAMES MONTGOMERY.

"Come out and shoot, Maggie," said Augustus to his sister, one fine day after dinner; "we've got the targets up."

"I can't; I have lost my bow and arrows."

"Where did you leave them?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. I think I threw them down on the lawn yesterday afternoon, when Oswald and Alice Cartwright rode over; but they are not there now."

"Of course not. I think I saw old Gillet pick them up and put them by the hall door."

"Then they are in Lobspound, I dare say," said Edward. "But as it is Saturday you can get them *out; so run* for your purse, and make haste, please;

as we want to practise for the children's archery meeting."

"I shall have no money left to buy story books," sighed Margaret to herself, as she went upstairs. "I shall have to change my last half-crown now, to get my things out of Lobspound. Let me see. There's the bow and two arrows, that will be threepence; then there's the shield, the belt and the gloves; perhaps I shall find the 'Girl's own Book' there too: I lost it last week, I think I left it in the summer house. My garden gloves are gone somewhere; I believe I left them in the drawing room. I wish I could be tidy, like Beatrice, but it is no use trying." Thus soliloquizing, Margaret took her purse, and sought her mother.

Mrs. Tresham knew what confusion and loss of time are caused by disorder, and so she tried to make her children appreciate order and neatness. A rule was established that whenever anything was left about, a penny was to be put into the poor box by the owner. There was no scolding, but the mother's cheerful voice might sometimes be heard saying, "Who has spilt the ink on the polished floor?" or "Who has left a spade or rake on the carriage drive? A penny in the poor box." And if the fault was repeated, the straying property got locked up in Lobspound, and it was only redeemed on Saturdays by the payment of a penny.

Lobspound was a cupboard between two doors, and for a long time, none of the children knew where

it was. One day, however, when they had leave to play at hide and seek all over the house, one party, being closely pursued by the other, sought refuge in the cupboard, the door of which had accidentally been left open. There, to their surprise, they beheld their toys; bows and arrows, spades, hoes, dolls, and story books, which they had lost. The game was suspended, and all stood for a moment looking in amazement at their treasures. The next impulse, however, was to shut the door, and run to tell their mother that Lobspound had been discovered.

"Oh, stop, please," said Marion, "there is my dear little doll. Let me take it; I must have it."

"But you mustn't," said Augustus; "it would not be good or honourable to take it, for mamma must have left the door open by mistake." Saying which he locked it, took the key, and all ran away to their mother's room.

"Here is the key, mamma, and we did not touch the things," said he, when they had obtained admittance and related the adventure; "we left them just as we found them."

"I am sure my children would not have done otherwise," said Mrs. Tresham, not without a touch of motherly pride in her tone; "but this time honesty shall be rewarded. I will give you back your things after dinner."

"Oh, mamma, I don't deserve to have mine, for I would have taken my doll if the others had not pre*vented* me," said Marion, humbly.

"Then you shall be forgiven for your truthfulness, my child," said Mrs. Tresham, kissing the broad open forehead of the little girl.

But we must now return to Margaret and her lost bow and arrows. Just as she was passing Lobspound she met her mother, and asked her to unlock the door. There, as she expected, she found them on the shelf, eight things in all, and Margaret looked dismayed. Eight pence out of half-a-crown was a good deal, and probably Mrs. Tresham thought so too, for she said, in an encouraging manner, "You shall only forfeit three pence this time, Maggie, for you have been much more careful this week in putting by your lesson books, so I hope that very soon you will be my tidy little girl." Margaret kissed her mother, and ran to join her brothers and sister on the lawn, where she was soon engaged with Edward in a match against Augustus and Beatrice.

In the evening Mrs. Tresham reminded the children that, being October, it was now time to open the poor box, to examine its contents, and consider what would be the best way of disposing of the money. This poor box had a history of its own. It happened some years before, that Mr. Tresham and his family were spending the summer in Paris. On the sixth of July that year Beatrice was four years old, and her papa gave her a few francs, and sent her out with Mrs. Smeakle to buy any toys she liked. Great was his astonishment when she returned with two pairs of wooden shoes called sabôts,

which the peasants wear in France. One pair, which fitted her own little feet over her shoes, she intended to keep herself; the other pair, which was large enough for the celebrated giant, Guy, Earl of Warwick, she presented to her father, whose great amusement was not lessened, when the child, suddenly recollecting she had brought no gift for her mother, declared that the said sabôts were to be between them both. They were really a curiosity to English eyes, so large and clumsy, and turned up at the toes. They were taken home to Middleford, and Mrs. Tresham's ingenuity soon invented a use for one; it was turned into a poor box. Markwell the carpenter was sent for, and told to fix a piece of wood on it with hinges, a lock and key, and a slit in the middle for the money to pass through. It was kept under the sofa in the drawing room, and not only the children's forfeits, but all odd pence, were put into it; nay, a good many pieces of silver and even gold were frequently found in the old shoe.

In the month of October it was unlocked, the money was counted, and with it Christmas presents, in the shape of clothing, were bought for three poor persons; for a little baby, in honour of our dear Lord; for a young girl, in honour of our Blessed Lady; and for an old man, in honour of St. Joseph.

"Mamma, the sabôt is so heavy I could hardly lift it, and so full I could not get my third penny quite in," said Margaret, as Augustus dragged the *old shoe* from under the sofa, and placed it by his

mother, who, unlocking it, turned out the contents upon the table.

"Oh, what a quantity of money!" said Marion, clapping her hands with joy.

"Suppose you count the gold, Marion, as that will be the easiest business, Beatrice the half crowns, Maggie the shillings, Neddie the sixpences, Augustus the pence, and I will help to add all up together," said Mrs. Tresham.

This was done with much merriment, each child scrambling for her own, and making little piles of sixpences, shillings and pence.

"How much has Marion got?" inquired her mother.

"One pound ten, mamma."

"And I," said Beatrice, "have nine half-crowns; let me see; that is one pound two and sixpence."

"I've got forty-five shillings," exclaimed Margaret; "that is two pounds five. Neddie, how many sixpences have you?"

"Fifty-three," said the boy, exultingly. "The half of fifty-three is twenty-six and one over; so I have one pound six and sixpence."

"Guess how many pennies I've got," said Augustus. "No less than ninety-one; that makes seven and seven pence."

The total was found to be six pounds, eleven shillings and seven pence.

"What a delightful large sum," said Edward; "nearly two pounds more than it was last half year.

I am sure that grandmamma and grandpapa must have contributed, when they were here, as well as our uncles."

"Yes," said Augustus, "and I saw cousin Charles slyly putting in some silver when he thought I was not looking at him. Oh mamma, do you think Charles will ever be a Catholic? The last time he was here, when he saw me in my surplice going to serve Mass, the tears came into his eyes, and he said, 'I'll tell you what, Augustus, you don't pray hard enough for me.' I asked him if he would really like me to pray for him, and he said, 'Indeed I would, though.'"

"Thank God!" said Mrs. Tresham. "Charles is a dear good fellow, and I feel convinced that if he once sees the truth he will embrace it: but faith is a gift of God, let us pray earnestly that he may obtain it, and suppose we offer our little Christmas charities for this intention."

"Oh, yes," exclaimed Augustus, "that will be delightful. If Charles becomes a Catholic he will be a priest, I'm sure. He is so good, he would not do anything wrong for the world. He told me the other day that he knew we did not adore the Blessed Virgin, and that we were quite right to have a picture of her in our room, because he said he understood perfectly that it only reminds us of our Blessed Lady, just as a picture of his poor mother reminds him of her."

"If Charles were a priest, he would preach very

nice sermons, because he always talks to us about being good in such a pleasant way," remarked Beatrice.

"Mamma, would you like Gussie or me to be a priest?" asked Edward.

"If God were to give you the vocation, my boy," said Mrs. Tresham, the tears starting into her eyes, "I should indeed consider it the greatest happiness I could have, for the priesthood is the highest dignity to which man can aspire: but it is a state that cannot be lightly chosen; there must, in fact, be a positive call from God. Those who have that call are blessed indeed," she added, as if thinking aloud.

"Well, if I cannot be a priest I would like to go to China and be martyred," said Edward; "I should glory in standing before the old heathen judge, and saying, 'I am a Christian, what have I to mind for?'"

Mrs. Tresham could not help smiling as she remarked, "It is not necessary to go so far as China to be, in one sense at least, a martyr."

"Oh, you mean the martyrs under Henry the Eighth, and wicked old Queen Bess; I remember all the instruments of torture we saw at the Tower, when papa took us there in the summer."

"There is another kind of martyrdom, besides that of the sword and the axe," said his mother. "Even in our own day there are those who suffer for the faith, not death, perhaps, but a constant petty persecution which is a living martyrdom, and if borne in a martyr's spirit must be infinitely pleas-

ing to God. I know of more than one case in which patient endurance for the faith was heroic. Your own dear father had to encounter many difficulties, having been sent by his guardians to a Protestant school. Some day I will tell you his history, which is full of interest, and shows what moral courage he had when even a young boy, braving the ridicule of his companions and the anger of his masters, rather than disobey the voice of conscience. But now let us decide who shall be the old man, the young woman, and the little baby this Christmas, for whom we are to buy clothing with the sabôt money. Suppose we give a suit to old Gillet in honour of St. Joseph, some warm useful things to poor Mary Grey for our Blessed Lady, and Marion shall name the little baby."

"Oh, I know, mamma," she cried; "the wild woman,—I mean, Mrs. Shepard's baby, who is now quite well again."

This arrangement was unanimously agreed upon, and Mrs. Tresham said she would drive to Hardale the next day, in order to buy the materials. The money was then locked up in the old shoe for the night.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WEDDING.

"The roads should blossom, the roads should bloom,
So fair a bride shall leave her home!
Should blossom and bloom with garlands gay,
So fair a bride shall pass to-day!"—LONGFELLOW.

"Some one is going to be married," said Mrs. Smeakle, one morning, as she was pouring out the milk and water for the nursery breakfast.

Mrs. Smeakle was a decided enemy to strong tea for young people, so she concocted a compound mixture of milk, hot water, and brown sugar. Of necessity it was brown sugar, for it gave a colouring to the rather unpalatable beverage, which made it resemble tea in appearance, and when Mrs. Smeakle wished particularly to treat the young folks under her charge, she poured a little tea from her own teapot into the jug of milk and water, but on no account would she allow it to be called tea, but only a "drop of that in it." In these days such a doubtful term might be looked upon with suspicion, but not so in those more simple times when children really were children, and when servants really were servants, good and faithful and true, and who cared for their master's and mistress's children almost as if they were their own.

"Some one is going to be married," said Mrs. Smeakle, "and I have given you 'a drop of that in it,' in honour of the future bride."

"Do tell us who it is, Smeakle," said Marion.

"Is it Miss Judd, or Miss Perry, or Widow Dimblebee?" inquired Beatrice, naming some of Smeakle's intimate acquaintances, who occasionally came to spend an hour with her after the children were in bed.

"None of these," replied the nurse, with great solemnity of tone.

"Then we give it up," said Margaret, lazily.

"It's some one in the house, so guess again, Miss Tresham."

"Surely not Kitty, or Mrs. Thomas, or"—

"You are very warm now, Marion, try once more."

"Oh, is it Betsey?"

"Yes, you are right at last; Betsey is going to be married to Mr. Trotter; they are to live at Knitswell Cross, and Mr. Trotter has taken the confectioner's shop which belonged to the late Mr. Dimblebee. Mrs. Dimblebee is going to take a smaller shop at Clearburn, so I hope your grandpapa will buy all the barley sugar kisses he gives you, of my friend Mrs. Dimblebee, instead of sending to London for them, as he used to do."

"When is the wedding to take place?"

"In a fortnight; and your mamma is so good as to say she will give the wedding dress, and your papa will give the wedding breakfast, and a servants' ball in *the evening*, so we shall have quite a grand day of it."

"I am so sorry we are going to lose Betsey," said Marion, "she is so good-natured, and never says anything when we come upstairs with dirty shoes."

"I wish she did, and then you would take more care. You are really all getting very rumgumtious of late, and not at all like gentlefolks' children. If I give you clean things one minute, they are not fit to be seen the next. You should take pattern by the Miss Hemlocks, who always look as if they came out of a bandbox: there's rhyme and reason in that."

"Oh, dear," muttered Beatrice, "I wouldn't like to come out of a band-box, would you, Maggie?"

"I'd rather come out than stay in, Trissey; but I wouldn't like to be a Hemlock at all; Charles says there is something poisonous about the whole family; and its quite dreadful having them here to spend a day, for Cecilia goes into fits if she sees papa, because her own father is so severe with her, and she thinks all papas are alike, I suppose."

"Poor little thing," said Mrs. Smeakle, compassionately; "you children have never known, and I hope never will know the sorrow that that child, not yet seven years old, has gone through; she quite won my heart the last time she spent the day with you, and if you knew all I could tell you, you would compassionate and love her as well."

Notwithstanding her seeming harshness when nice clean frocks and pinafores were tossed and tumbled five minutes after she had put them on, and her sermons on the Miss Hemlocks, or her repeated decla-

rations, when any new mischief was attempted, that she never saw such unruly children in all her life, yet Mrs. Smeakle would be very wrath indeed if any one else dared to insinuate that they were not all perfection, and forgetting what she had said perhaps the moment before, declared, in her blind partiality, that "Our children are never naughty or troublesome, excepting when they play with other folks's children, who make them wild and disobedient."

With all these peculiarities, Mrs. Smeakle was nevertheless a most valuable self-sacrificing nurse. She was the daughter of a well-to-do farmer in Berkshire, who sent her to a rather superior day school, and she had learnt to read well, and to write a very good hand. She took great pleasure in teaching the little ones, and moreover she encouraged all sorts of outdoor sports, and taught the children how to find amusement and interest in their daily walks throughout every season of the year. In the spring, if they strolled into the narrow lanes, she helped them to search the high green banks, on the tops of which the hedges were planted, for sweet blue and white violets, which grew there in profusion; or they would gather cowslips for balls, or to give to Mrs. Carter, for she made an excellent wine of these spring flowers, which grow so abundantly in Essex. Sometimes, Smeakle and Teresa would sit with the baby, on the green bank of a brook which flowed through a large meadow near Great Middleford, while *the other* children fished for minnows, or gathered

watercresses for tea. Then in the autumn there was nutting in the woods, mushroom hunting in the fields, and blackberry picking in the lanes, which was always fun, especially when they went on the road to Hardale, for there they often met their friends the Cartwrights gathering the wild fruit also. Mrs. Smeakle did not approve of their eating many blackberries, but having a charitable heart, she encouraged her young folk to make their amusement profitable, by giving the fruit to some poor cottager who had a large family, and who would be glad to have it to put into a dumpling. This good nurse showed the children how to cultivate their gardens, how to sow the various kinds of seeds, and how to plant and transplant, and take cuttings. She taught them also the names of all the birds, which were so tame at Middleford, because Mr. Tresham would not allow any of them to be shot, neither would he permit the cruel practice of taking their nests; but Mrs. Smeakle showed them to the children, that they might see the colour of the eggs, and observe how each species has a different mode of building.

Even winter had its attractions and amusements, and, wrapped up in warm cloth pelisses, they took their hoops or skipping ropes, and enjoyed an hour or two's run on the gravel walks, and came home glowing with health and spirits.

Betsey was a good servant and a dutiful daughter. She was always neatly dressed, but she spent no money on useless finery, so every year she had a

few pounds to spare from her wages, which she sent home to her parents, who were very respectable, but in poor circumstances, having had a large family to provide for. They were not able to go to Middleford, so Mrs. Tresham gave their daughter leave to go and see them before her marriage, and sent them a number of useful things, which were very acceptable.

On the eve of the wedding, Betsey sat crying in the nursery, talking to her good friend and adviser, Mrs. Smeakle.

"There now, don't take on in that way, Betsey, cheer up. It won't be like going away, you know, for you will live so near to us that I shall be able to walk over with the children now and then."

"You'll always be welcome, indeed, Mrs. Smeakle, but it will never be the same again. I have spent such happy days at Middleford, I can't bear to think of leaving all those who have been so good to me." And here Betsey cried so bitterly that Beatrice and Margaret thought it must be a very dreadful thing to get married, and they pitied her from their hearts.

Each child had contributed gifts to make to this faithful servant, which were provided, of course, by their parents. Mrs. Tresham gave a bedstead and bedding, and a nice carpet for the little parlour. The Père Laurent's present was a well-bound Missal and a New Testament. Augustus and Edward gave some silver spoons; Margaret and Beatrice a large chest of drawers; Marion and Aloysius a set of tea-things.

The children were filling Betsey's lap with little

nick-knacks for her parlour chimney-piece, a china sheep, a pair of Derbyshire spar candlesticks, large shells, a toy buy-a-broom, with other trifles; and the poor thing sat sobbing there, trying to say to the children that she could not take their playthings from them, but it was quite useless, for she was far too much overcome for speech.

The wedding took place at an early hour, in the little chapel. The ceremony was performed by the good Père Laurent, and afterwards, as Catholic marriages were not at that time acknowledged in England, the bride and bridegroom were obliged to go to Great Middleford, where the ceremony was again performed in the Protestant church by Mr. Jackson.

When they returned, they found a nice breakfast laid out in the servants' hall, which the maids had decked with evergreens. Miss Judd the dressmaker was there, also Mr. and Mrs. Carter, Miss Perry the glover's daughter, Mr. Glasscock the baker with his wife, Mr. Whitaker the ironmonger, farmer and Mrs. Peatie, and others. When the repast was over, poor Betsey ran to the nursery for a last peep at the "dear baby," who was unconscious of all the joys and troubles of that day. Then she hurried downstairs to thank Mrs. Tresham for the hundredth time for all her kindness, and when the vehicle which had been hired to take the newly-married couple to Knitswell drove off, Mrs. Smeakle threw some old shoes after them for good luck.

The ball in the evening was in the servants' hall.

he heard all the particulars of the case, he shook his head, and declared it his opinion that the snow man had done the mischief, and that the poor little boy was in for rheumatic fever. He did not anticipate danger, but said that Neddie would suffer a great deal, and must be kept very quiet.

So Augustus's bed was moved out of the room, and Kitty took up her quarters there as nurse. For more than a fortnight the child was very ill, and nothing could exceed the gentle and assiduous care that was lavished on him. He endured great pain; every limb ached, and yet no complaint ever escaped his lips, and he was so gentle and patient that every one said it was a real pleasure to nurse him. His brother and sisters sent him toys, books, and everything they could think of, to amuse him; but when he got a little better, the happiest hours of the day were those when his father or mother sat by his bedside, and read to him the adventures of Robinson Crusoe, or Sandford and Merton.

Poor Augustus missed his brother very much; they had always been inseparable companions, and he found it very difficult to amuse himself alone.

"There is no fun in anything now," said he, one day, when Mr. Tresham found him sitting by himself in the library; "I can't play without Neddie." Then the tears, that had been for a long time driven back, were shed without restraint, as he laid his head on his father's shoulder.

"*Well, I think* you may come and see him now;

it will not do him any harm, for he is much better to-day, and he is continually asking for you, so I will go and see if he is awake."

Augustus brightened up at these words, and followed his father to the door of the little invalid's room. He was at once admitted; but when he saw his brother's thin white face and hands, he had to struggle with his feelings not to cry again. Neddie, however, was so pleased to see Augustus, and had so many questions to ask about everything and everybody, that the half-hour passed for both the boys only too quickly. From that time Augustus went every day to see Neddie, who very soon was able to be dressed, and to lie on a sofa near the fire, listening to the stories his brother or sisters read to him.

One fine day Mrs. Tresham took some of the children for a drive to Sawlington, a town about seven miles from Middleford, where there was a large toy-shop, for she wanted to get some new books and puzzles for Neddie to amuse himself with. He was standing at the window, where he had gone to watch the carriage drive off, when he heard his name called, and, turning round, saw his father.

"Oh, papa, what a beauty!" he exclaimed, as Mr. Tresham placed by his side a nice little polished table.

"See, Neddie, don't you remember the old mulberry tree that blew down last year, and which you all lamented so much? Well, I have turned a piece of it into a table for my dear boy, as a reward for

his patience during his long illness. Look, here is a little drawer, where you can put some of your books, and your mother has made a table cloth, so you can have your dinner on it, until you are well enough to dine with us all downstairs."

"Oh, thank you, papa, how very kind of you! I shall love my own dear little table," cried Neddie, in great glee. "We can play at draughts and cards on it."

"Yes, and your mother and I will come and lunch with you to-morrow. And now I have just got half an hour to spare, so let us read something more about Robinson Crusoe."

"I used to think I should like to be wrecked on a desert island," said Edward, as he got his favourite book, "but when I was ill I found I could not get on at all by myself, and I should have been wretched without you and mamma to come and see me."

"Ah, yes, Neddie, it is very pleasant to read of narrow escapes, and wonderful adventures, by the fire-side, but the reality is generally bad enough, and no fun at all."

After a delightful half-hour with Robinson Crusoe, Mr. Tresham was called away on business, and Smeakle came in with baby, to amuse Edward until the return of the others from Sawlington.

Besides buying some books and toys, Mrs. Tresham had another motive for her drive. She had been informed the day before that a poor Catholic *woman, who* had formerly been in the service of a

friend of her's, was dying at Sawlington in a state of great poverty, and she wished to see what could be done for her. On reaching the town, they drove at once to Mrs. Forrester's, which was the name of the poor woman.

Stopping the carriage at the entrance to the narrow alley, Mrs. Tresham told the coachman to drive about for a quarter of an hour with the children, and she proceeded alone to the house. The door was opened by a little girl, who occupied with her grandfather two rooms on the ground floor. On being asked if Mrs. Forrester lived there, the child replied that she did, and led the way up two flights of steep narrow stairs to a miserable garret at the top of the house.

There, on a bed of straw, without a single blanket, and only a thin old counterpane to cover her, was stretched a young woman in the last stage of consumption. A beautiful little girl, about the height of Marion, with long flaxen curls, bare feet, and a poor tattered frock, sat by her mother on a low three-legged stool. The woman was quietly sleeping when Mrs. Tresham entered the room, so she gently drew the child to her, and in a low tone inquired her name.

"Mary Forrester," was the reply.

"Where is your father?"

"Dada's dead. Mammy says she'd like to die too, if she could take me with her to God."

"Can you say your prayers?"

"Oh, yes. I say the 'Our Father' and the 'Hail Mary' very often, mammy likes to hear it; and I say, 'Please God make mammy better, and make me a good child. Amen.'"

"Have you had your dinner?"

"Dinner?" repeated the child, with an astonished look in her deep blue eyes.

"Yes; have you had anything to eat this afternoon?"

"Mammy had a crust of bread in the morning; it was so hard she soaked it in water, and gave it to me, and I ate it. The old man downstairs gave mammy a cup of tea yesterday."

"Yesterday!" said Mrs. Tresham, shuddering; "and has she had none to-day?"

"Oh, no; but mammy says that God is good, and won't let us starve, if we ask Him to take care of us."

Mrs. Tresham took some bread and butter out of the little basket of provisions she had brought with her, gave it to the child, and while she was eagerly eating it up, she looked round the room, and observed its scanty furniture. The wooden chair she was sitting on, and the little stool, was all it contained, excepting that on the wall, opposite to the poor woman, as she lay on her hard bed, was hung a handsome ivory crucifix, on an ebony cross. A rosary was twisted round her thin white hand, and two books were by her side. Mrs. Tresham opened one, and found it to be a "Garden of the Soul." In *the first page* was written, "For Jane Robertson, a

reward for good conduct." Then followed the priest's signature, and these words: "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; let me not be confounded for ever. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all He hath done for thee." The other book was a nicely bound Missal, and in that was written, "Presented to Jane Forrester, on her wedding day, by Lady Casmajor." Four or five pictures were in the book, on which were written, in childish handwriting: "For my good nurse, from Little Willie." "For dear Jane, from Monica." "For Jane, with Lucy's love."

"This woman," thought Mrs. Tresham, "has seen better days." And while she was considering what would be the best to be done, the poor creature opened her eyes, and perceiving a stranger, tried to sit up. The effort, however, was vain; she sank back, and her visitor, arranging the hard pillow, gently addressed her.

"I have heard that you are ill, and I have come to see if I can do you any good."

"Thank you, ma'am, very ill," was the faint reply; "but I think I shall rally, at least I hope so, please God, for I have a journey yet to make."

"Poor thing! you must not think of a journey now, but take some of this jelly that I have brought with me, and a little wine and water before you talk any more."

The good nourishment revived Mrs. Forrester, and then, hearing from Mrs. Tresham that she was a

Catholic, told her tale of misery. She had been under-nurse in the family of Lady Casmajor; she had, she thought, given satisfaction, and was very happy in her situation, which she had left to marry, contrary to the advice of all her friends, a Catholic indeed in name, but a man who was idle and intemperate.

Jane's mother had died when she was very young. An uncle, who was rich, had placed her only brother at one of our best Catholic colleges, where he received a good education. Her father, who was highly respectable, lived comfortably on a small income, derived chiefly from lodging houses in London. He could have maintained his daughter at home, but as she had no mother, and had always been over-indulged by her father, he had been advised to place her, for a few years at least, in a situation which offered at the time, under a nurse who was a distant relative of his own, and one who he knew would take an interest in his child.

At her marriage, to which he gave an unwilling consent, he presented her with a hundred pounds, besides many handsome presents, and they established themselves in a little business in a quiet country town. Soon, however, the husband's idle habits rendered it necessary for them to leave their happy home for smaller and poorer rooms in a back street. Then Bernard Forrester began to frequent *the public house*, and little by little he became a *confirmed drunkard*, neglecting his work more and

more, and seeing, without any appearance of good feeling, his young wife, and two little children, wasting away for want of proper nourishment.

Two or three years passed on in struggling poverty, when at last Forrester fell ill and died of intemperance. The baby boy, who was a sickly child, was soon afterwards called to a better world, and the poor widow was left alone, in decline, and all but penniless, with her little girl.

Her father had died the year before, and the money he had left to his daughter had all gone, excepting a few shillings, to pay her husband's debts. The funeral over, Mrs. Forrester sold all her remaining goods, excepting the crucifix, which had belonged to her mother, and the two books mentioned above. With these, and a small bundle of clothes for herself and child, she set off for London, a distance of more than forty miles, with a view to try and interest her brother in behalf of his little niece. She had travelled a short distance on foot, but finding her strength failing her, had taken a place outside a stage coach as far as Sawlington. When she reached that town, she felt too ill to continue her journey, for the piercing cold increased her cough, and brought on inflammation of the lungs, so she hired a small and miserably cold attic, for she could afford nothing better, and paid the woman in the next room to buy her and her child the necessaries of life. Mrs. Forrester had been a fortnight in the town, when, feeling considerably worse, she

asked Mrs. Brown, who was a good sort of person, if she could not see a Catholic priest.

"There's none as I knows of," replied the landlady, "no nearer than Middleford, where the gentlefolks at the Hall is Romanists. My husbin works there, and I'll ask him to tell as how you are a dying, and would like to see a Popish clergyman."

The man delivered the message to Mrs. Thomas, the housekeeper, who repeated it to her mistress without delay.

"I see, ma'am," said Mrs. Forrester, as she concluded her history, "I see how wonderful are God's mercies to those who trust in Him. All my life I have prayed that I might not die without the sacraments of our holy Church, and even when it seemed to be impossible, I hoped on and on, and now God sends you like an angel to comfort me. And, O ma'am, all I ask of you is to beg of a priest to come and hear my last confession, and let me receive my Blessed Lord in Holy Communion once more before I die."

"You shall have that happiness, please God. A Catholic priest will be at Middleford to-morrow morning. I will tell him all about you, and you may depend on a visit from him in the course of the day."

Mrs. Tresham knew well that sympathy and tender care are more welcome to the sick than even the choicest gifts bestowed in a grudging spirit, and her sweet and gentle manner seemed to soothe the poor *sufferer.* She had observed during the time that

Mrs. Forrester was speaking, that Mrs. Brown was rough; she came in and out of the room, and opened and shut the door noisily, walking heavily, and speaking in a loud tone of voice. She was a good woman, but she had never been ill in her life, and had no idea of that quiet tranquil manner that is so essential in a sick room.

So, with the best will in the world, Mrs. Brown could not make a good nurse, and Mrs. Tresham determined to send Kitty that evening to nurse Mrs. Forrester during the short time she might yet have to live. She then took leave of the poor woman, promising to come and see her again very soon, and before quitting the house, made arrangements with the landlady that Mrs. Forrester should be removed into a more comfortable room on the first floor, where she could have a fire, and she ordered two good bedsteads to be put up for the invalid and Kitty.

During the drive home, Mrs. Forrester was the subject of conversation.

"Oh, mamma," said Beatrice, "do let us dress the little girl. I dare say my clothes will fit her, as she is nearly my age."

"Very likely they would, Trissey, but I always like to give your cast-off things to Smeakle, who has so many little nephews and nieces, who are not well off, and we must not abandon old friends for new ones."

"Oh no," said Marion; "besides, I heard Smeakle saying she was going to send off a box to her sister-in-law next week, so I asked her, before we started,

what I could buy for her to send to them, but she only laughed and said, 'Oh, buy me a silver nothing to put on my sleeve.'"

"That was said joking," said Augustus, "but, mamma, we did not forget her at the toyshop, and we have all got some little presents for her brother's children."

"That's right, dear, she will be very pleased; and really there is no enjoyment in life greater than that of giving pleasure, though, of course, we must have a higher motive, and do it for God, in order to make it of any value in His sight. We should never forget those who are spending their lives in our service, especially when they are faithful and devoted to us, as Smeakle has proved herself to be. She is not only a good nurse, but a good daughter likewise, and does what servants should do; that is, instead of spending all her wages in dress, she sends what she can spare to her poor father and mother."

"I thought Smeakle's father was a rich farmer," remarked Augustus.

"So he was at one time, but the crops failed during three successive years, and he had also losses among the cattle and sheep, so, poor things, they were quite ruined, and would probably have had to go to the workhouse, had they not been assisted by kind friends, and by Smeakle herself. As for poor little Mary Forrester, I will cut out some clothes for her to-morrow morning, and Margaret and Trissey *may help me* to make them."

CHAPTER IX.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS.

"And well our Christian sires of old
Loved when the year its course had rolled,
And brought blithe Christmas back again,
With all his hospitable train.
Domestic and religious rite
Gave honour to the holy night:
On Christmas eve the bells were rung;
On Christmas eve the Mass was sung;
That only night in all the year,
Saw the stoled priest the Chalice rear."

WALTER SCOTT.

"Trissey, dear, ring the bell," said Mrs. Tresham, one morning, just as breakfast was over, and the children came in, ready equipped for a walk, to say good morning to their parents. "Ring the bell; I must send for another cup and saucer, for there is Gillet sweeping the snow from the drive, and looking almost frozen to death—he shall have some nice hot tea to warm him, poor old man."

No sooner said than done; the boys quickly called him into the hall, and placed him by a blazing fire; the little girls ran out with the cup of tea, sugar and milk, while Mrs. Tresham cut such a large piece of bread, and spread on it such a quantity of butter,

that ever afterwards thick pieces of bread and butter went by the name of "Gillet slices."

This poor old man of seventy-five was a good specimen of an English peasant. He had a round fair face, with a florid complexion, and a profusion of white hair which hung about his shoulders. He always looked smiling and cheerful, and still earned sufficient to maintain himself.

"Good morning, Gillet," said Mrs. Tresham; "how are you this cold weather?"

"Pretty purely, madam, thank ye," said the old man, pulling a grey lock of his hair. "I'se had the rheumatiz very badly, but I'se got rid of it now."

As it was very near Christmas, this occasion was taken to give Gillet the suit of clothes that had been bought with the money found in the sabôt; and the tears came into the old man's eyes as he received his present, which sent him home happy on that bleak wintry day.

It was Monday, the twenty-third of December, and all was joyous bustle at Middleford. The good old custom of dressing the house with holly and other evergeens was vigorously kept up, and the whole family went to the servants' hall to inspect the beef that was to be given out to the poor for their Christmas dinner. So many pounds to each family, with potatoes and bread, according to the number of mouths to eat it; a portion of coal being also given to cook it with.

The snow was too deep on the ground to permit

of a walk to Mrs. Shepard of the Wood, so Jack, her husband, was desired to call for the clothes that had been made for the little baby.

As for poor Mary Grey, who was in consumption, and would probably never rise from her bed, a comfortable mattress was sent to her, and two good blankets, with some oranges, and plenty of strengthening food.

In the course of the day Kitty returned from Sawlington with the poor little orphan girl, for Mrs. Forrester had died on Thursday. The Abbé Laurent had frequently visited her, and he was praying by the bedside when she expired in the happiest dispositions. Mrs. Tresham had also been several times to see her, and had promised the dying woman to protect her child.

A favourite fellow servant of Mrs. Forrester's had married and settled at Clearburn, and Mrs. Tresham told her that it was her intention to place little Mary under her care, where she would be treated kindly, and would attend the Catholic school in the village.

The poor woman smiled brightly as she listened to this arrangement. "Oh, thank God," she cried, in the fulness of her heart; "my child's future lot was my only anxiety, but now I shall die happy."

Little Mary remained at Middleford under Kitty's care for a few days, and then was sent to Clearburn, where good Mrs. Baker received her into her family as one of her own.

On Christmas Eve, at two o'clock, Mr. and Mrs. Tresham, and the two boys, started for Hardale, to meet the coach, which was to bring Mr. Dudley, dear kind Uncle Fred, who was beloved by every one, and who seemed to take the whole world into his large heart.

The carriage drove up to the inn at Hardale almost at the same time that the coach came in. There stood the ostlers, with four fresh horses, all ready harnessed for the next stage, but with a passenger less, for down jumped Uncle Fred, his face beaming with benevolence as usual, and was soon driving off to Middleford, questioning and answering questions all the way.

"How did Uncle Fred think that Neddie looked?" Mrs. Tresham anxiously inquired, for he had truly lost all his colour, and outgrown his strength.

"Oh, he will soon be all right again," replied Mr. Dudley, in a cheerful tone. "We must pinch his cheeks, and put a weight on his head to keep him from growing, for if he goes on at this rate he'll beat tall Uncle Jack, and that will never do."

Uncle Jack was Mrs. Tresham's youngest brother. He was in the navy, and his ship was daily expected in the docks.

"Have you heard anything of the *Bombay?*" asked Mrs. Tresham.

"Oh, she will soon reach the shores of Old England now," said he. Then he talked of other things

until they got to Middleford, where Uncle Fred was soon surrounded by his little nieces.

"How goes it, Maggie? Halloa, Trissey! Here comes my own Tumtin," by which name Marion used to call herself when a very little child.

On Christmas Day all the children, except little Ally, dined with their parents. Uncle Fred made fun of everything; he set fire to the mince pies, turned orange peel into little pigs with pips for eyes, and played at nick notch or no notch with the largest apple on the dish. But the pleasantest time of all was after tea, when they were all seated round the fire in the drawing room.

"Will you tell us a story, please, Uncle Fred?" petitioned Augustus.

"Oh yes, a story," cried a chorus of juvenile voices.

"A story! who ever heard of such a thing?" said Uncle Fred, affecting great astonishment. "Very well," after a pause, "what is it to be about?"

"A ghost story, please," said Edward.

"Yes, a ghost story," chimed in all the others.

"But Tumtin won't sleep if I tell a ghost story."

"Oh, yes, I shall, uncle, I am not afraid," said Marion, drawing herself up, and thinking, no doubt, that Uncle Fred had forgotten she had passed her fifth birthday.

"Marion can look 'the wild woman of the woods' in the face now, without trembling all over," remarked Mr. Tresham.

"Oh, if that is the case, I shall not be afraid of the consequences, so I will begin."

A GHOST STORY.

"Once upon a time, two youths, called Carl and Hugo, were riding through a forest in Germany. They wanted to reach a certain town before nightfall, for the forest had the reputation of being infested with robbers. They used to dart out from behind the trees, seize the bridle of a horse, and, presenting a pistol to the rider, would say, 'Your money or your life,' and the traveller might be very thankful if he did come off with his life. Sometimes the gang took the horse, and the unfortunate owner had to find his way home as best he could on his ten toes.

"This being the order of things in the forest, you will not be surprised to hear that Carl and Hugo hurried along quickly, as daylight began to disappear. They felt a little nervous, but were ashamed to acknowledge their fears, which they betrayed, however, by the agitated sound of their voices. 'Carl is afraid; I can tell he is, by the tone of his voice,' thought Hugo. 'Hugo is desperately nervous; I can see it by his manner,' thought Carl.

"Presently the full moon rose, and lighted up the ruins of a grim old castle that stood on an eminence at a little distance from the forest.

"'Let us make for that castle, and rest there till *morning*,' cried Carl.

"'Better not,' returned Hugo.

"'Why so?' rejoined his friend.

"'It's haunted, and I'd rather face twenty living men armed to the teeth, than the ghost of one dead one.'

"'Pshaw!' replied his companion, 'then I wouldn't, so there's the difference. You never heard of a ghost doing any one any harm; besides, I bet you twenty pounds it's only an old woman's tale.'

"'Done,' said Hugo, who was rather fond of a wager. 'Then if we discover that the place is haunted, you'll pay me twenty pounds.'

"'Done,' cried Carl, 'I'll pay you down twenty pounds; but mind you, my man, if we see no ghosts, you are to pay me.'

"This agreed upon, they rode until they came to a gate, which they found padlocked, so they leapt over it, and soon reached the foot of the hill on which the castle stood. Here they dismounted, and led their horses until they came to an old barn, where they found some straw, and also a little hay, with which they fed their steeds, and fastening them to a post, left them there for the night, and proceeded on foot. Presently they heard a noise, and a sort of rustling in the ivy-clad walls.

"'What's that?' cried Hugo.

"'Hist, man, it's only the owls hooting,' said Carl, laughing.

"On they passed, through the entrance, and

through long gloomy corridors. Again there was a noise, and this time it was footsteps. Footsteps in another corridor, that seemed to be keeping pace with theirs.

"'Carl,' cried Hugo, 'do you hear?'

"'Do you hear?' repeated a voice.

"Carl burst out laughing.

"Then there were sounds of mocking laughter in the distance, that made Hugo shake from head to foot. Presently, near the end of the long passage, they came to a door. They opened it, and found that it led to a large room, which they entered. It was totally devoid of furniture, excepting that a long wooden bench or window-seat ran along one side of the wall. On this they were glad enough to stretch their weary limbs; but first they looked round to see if they could find anything wherewith to make a fire, for they wanted one as much for the light as for the warmth. After groping about, they discovered, in a corner of the passage, two very old wooden chairs. These they easily broke up, and striking a light with a flint, soon made a cheerful blaze. Then they took out of a knapsack a flask of brandy and water, drank it to the health of the ghosts, and then Carl, rolling up his great coat for a pillow, fell fast asleep.

"Hugo sat watching him, and envying him as well. How he wished he could sleep, poor fellow; but it was much too near twelve o'clock, he thought. When *once the clock* had struck one, then he too would

try and slumber. He took out his watch; it was just half-past eleven. 'In a short time,' thought he, 'if the place is haunted the ghosts will appear. Carl will be asleep, and if he does not see he will not believe, and I shall lose the wager, so I shall wake him up five minutes before twelve.'

"Thus he sat musing. Presently he heard a slight noise, and looking up, saw, to his horror, a figure standing before him. What this figure was like, he never afterwards could clearly describe. He said it seemed to him like the shadow of silver paper in the form of a man; but though he could not see any hands, yet something like hands positively pointed to him as he was sitting there, and beckoned to him to follow him.

"Hugo rose at the bidding of the ghost, for he feared to disobey. Passing by Carl he tried to scream, but the ghost put its finger of hot silver paper on his mouth, and it seemed, as it were, to seal it up. The figure moved on towards the wall, on the side of the room opposite the fire-place. There was no door there, nor opening of any sort visible, nevertheless the ghost passed through and Hugo followed him!

"No sooner, however, had he done so, than he fell down a frightful precipice. He was now in a place that was quite dark. Whether or not he was hurt by the fall he could not tell, and he neither heard nor saw the ghost, but he got up, and creeping softly along, found that he was in a room or cellar, he

could not tell which, and he groped about, hoping to find some hole by which he could escape.

"Soon he thought he had found a door, but as the walls appeared to be panelled, it was difficult to say. However, he fumbled and fumbled, and at last, to his great joy, felt something that seemed like a key. But now, though poor Hugo had found what he had been seeking so eagerly, he hesitated to unlock the door, not knowing where it might lead to. He trembled from head to foot, while drops of cold perspiration fell from his face. How long he would have stood there it is impossible to tell, but he was startled from his irresolution by hearing a noise close to him that resembled snoring. Terrified out of his wits, he grasped the key, and turned it violently round. At the same moment a frightful shriek was heard.

"What was the cause?" asked Uncle Fred, looking round at his youthful audience.

"Robbers were behind the door," suggested Beatrice.

"Coiners," cried Augustus.

"Highwaymen," said Edward.

"Ghosts," muttered Tumtin, in a tremulous voice.

"Wrong, all wrong," said Mr. Dudley.

"We give it up," said Margaret.

Uncle Fred repeated solemnly, "A frightful shriek was heard, and a thundering voice cried out, 'Oh, my nose! my nose!' Hereupon Hugo, in his *turn, gave out* a yell that echoed through the castle

walls, and startled the owls from their roosts, and then he—he—awoke! retaining in his strong grasp, not a key, but poor Carl's unfortunate nose. Hugo had been asleep, and it was all a dream. In his sleep he had been walking round the room, and had taken Carl for a door, and his nose for a key!"

"Oh, how very funny!" cried the children, laughing. "Did Hugo tell Carl all about it?"

"Yes, when he was wide awake he sat down by his friend, and told his dream, and they laughed over it, until the sun, peeping through the windows, warned them that it was day. Then they once more set off on their journey, and reached the town to which they were going without further adventure, and Carl won his wager."

"But," said Marion, "when they first entered the castle they really did hear footsteps and talking in the corridors."

"Oh, that was only the echo of their own voices and steps," said Augustus; "I guessed that directly."

"Well, thank you, Uncle Frederic, you really have told us a very nice ghost story," said Beatrice, "and I like it all the better because there were no ghosts at all."

"Bravo, bravo, Trissey," cried Mr. Dudley, laughing, "I'll think of another ghost story, then, for to-morrow evening, taking care, of course, to leave out the ghosts."

CHAPTER X.

THE LUCKY BAG.

"I love to look on a scene like this,
Of wild and careless play,
And persuade myself that I am not old,
And my locks are not yet grey;
For it stirs the blood in an old man's heart,
And it makes his pulses fly,
To catch the thrill of a happy voice,
And the light of a pleasant eye."—WILLIS.

"The 'Lucky Bag!' We are to have the 'Lucky Bag' to-morrow evening," cried Margaret, as she rushed into the night-nursery, before going to bed, throwing down a chair in her eagerness, and waking baby out of his first sleep, thereby drawing upon herself a not unmerited reproof from the nurse.

"Now, Miss Tresham, didn't I tell you never to come into the nursery at this time of night, stamping and screaming in that riotous way; but one might as well whistle jigs to a milestone as speak to you, really, one might.—So we are going to have the 'Lucky bag,' are we?" added she, after a pause, and softening her tone, as baby, instead of crying, began to crow with delight at seeing his sister. "Really, *your mamma* is so very kind, she is always thinking

what she can do to please everybody; she's been half the morning preparing it, I know, let alone spending hours at Hardale, on that bitter cold day when it wasn't fit for any Christian to put a foot out of doors, that it wasn't."

Amongst various amusements at Christmas, this was one which, perhaps, the children enjoyed more than any other. On a convenient day, a large carpet bag, of a shape and size now quite out of date, was filled by Mrs. Tresham with presents for the maid-servants. It was brought into the nursery in the afternoon, where they all assembled for the purpose of drawing the prizes, and made as much fun as they could over it, to amuse the children.

At the time appointed, in they all came;—Mrs. Smeakle drew first, her prize was a new shawl. Mrs. Thompson got several yards of bonnet ribbon, such as was worn in those days, and a knife, and pair of scissors. Kitty won a summer dress. One maid got a piece of net, ribbon, and lace, to make some nice new caps. Another got some worked collars. Patience, the kitchen maid, drew last, and her parcel was the largest of all.

"What in the world can it be?" said Mrs. Thompson, in queer Welsh dialect, as paper after paper was unfolded, and still no prize appeared. At last the size of the parcel diminished, until it was so small that it was scarcely larger than a bean. The last piece of paper was unfolded, and there was no prize!

"No prize,—a blank!" cried Beatrice, throwing it down. "I'm so sorry, Patience."

"Never mind, Miss, I'll get something next year, I dare say," said the maid, who was patience by nature as well as by name.

"I think there's something written on the paper," said Mrs. Smeakle.

"Yes," cried Marion, snatching it up, and reading aloud: "'Go to the storeroom, and see what the old lady, sitting in her arm-chair, holds in her hands.'"

Off set the children, in wild spirits, and the maids followed, along the gallery, up one passage and down another, until they reached the store-room. There, sur eenough, sat an old lady, with her back to the door. "Who are you? What's your name? Are you Mrs. Carter, or Mrs. Dimblebee, or Mrs. Shepard?" they asked, just peeping into the room without venturing to enter. No answer.

"How funny! She has mamma's garden bonnet on, and the cloak she gave to Smeakle last year."

"It's grandmamma, I do believe," cried Marion.

"You goose," said Edward, "do you think that if grandmamma were in the house we should be allowed to make all this row? Besides, how could she get in without every one knowing of it?"

"Grandmamma, what great ears you have got," said Augustus, laughing, and then they all ran into the room, and faced the figure, which proved to be a "mawkin." A string was tied round a bolster, to *make a head,* which had a mask on, and the figure

was dressed in an old gown, the sleeves of which were stuffed. Gloves were tied on for hands, and in them the mawkin held a turnip.

"A turnip!" said Edward, in dismay.

"A turnip," echoed Margaret, "nothing but a turnip!"

"Patience gets enough of that sort of thing every day in the kitchen," sighed Beatrice.

"Never mind, miss, we have had plenty of fun over it, haven't we?" said Patience, good-humouredly.

"Give me the turnip," said Teresa; "it will just do to make some syrup with sugar candy for Miss Marion's cough. But what's this, miss, rolled round the stalk? A piece of paper, with something written on it."

"Oh, let me see," cried Augustus, who took it, and read aloud, "'My dear young friends, if you are not satisfied with this turnip, go to the north attic, and see what the Duke of Wellington's knapsack contains.'"

Off the whole party set again, Augustus and Edward carrying the mawkin between them, and running like rabbits up the back stairs, and along a narrow passage, at the end of which was the north attic. Throwing the door open, they beheld another figure, dressed up in papa's regimentals, and carrying a knapsack, on which was written: "A prize from Waterloo." It was quickly opened, and found to contain a nice warm winter dress.

So Patience got a present at last, and well pleased she was with it, as she and the other maids followed

the children downstairs, carrying the two mawkins in triumph to the nursery, where the fun terminated in tea and buttered toast, to which the little girls invited as many of the maids as could be spared.

"Hannah," said Beatrice to the new housemaid, "as we were passing by the crimson room I saw a good fire in it, and everything seemed ready for a visitor. Is any one coming? I did not hear mamma say she expected anybody."

A wink from Kitty warned Hannah not to tell.

"Oh, there's a mystery, I see. Well, I love mysteries at Christmas, for they always end in fun."

Beatrice was not destined to be disappointed. When she and her sisters were summoned to dessert, they found, to their great surprise and joy, that Uncle Jack formed one of the party.

The welcoming that followed may be more easily imagined than described, and his presence greatly increased the enjoyment of all at Middleford. During the next few days there was a great deal to show him, and much to be done. He took long walks with Uncle Fred, skated on the ice, drawing the children on chairs up and down and round and round the piece of water, for the ice, as old Gillet said in answer to Mrs. Tresham's inquiries, "was strong enow to bear a waggon load and four hosses, and the ladies needn't be afeard in no ways." Then there was also so much to tell, for the bright young sailor was interested in everything, and what is not alto*gether a* common quality, he was a good listener, and

seemed quite as much pleased to examine the improvements at home, or to inquire after tame birds, rabbits, white mice, and other pets, as he was to reply to the numberless questions put to him about his adventures by sea and by land.

Two or three days after his arrival, Mr. Tresham received a letter from old Mr. Dudley, giving him a very pressing invitation to spend a month at Clearburn, and to take all his family with him. He urged that the opportunity might never offer again of having all his children and grandchildren round him. His eldest son Arthur and his family had returned from Ireland, but were going abroad in April for two years. His sailor boy, as he called him, had leave of absence, Frederick had promised to come, so that if Mr. and Mrs. Tresham would join the party it would be complete. He further added that he was getting very old and feeble, and hoped he would not refuse this request. Mr. Tresham, being unwilling to disappoint his father-in-law, wrote in reply that he would start on Thursday, the second of January, and hoped to reach Clearburn on Friday evening in time for dinner.

When the children were told that they were all going to spend a month with grandpapa and grandmamma they were in great glee. They had been very glad to go to London, and very glad to return to the old home, and now they were equally pleased to leave it again for a while, especially as the two uncles agreed to travel with them.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SHIPWRECK.

"And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold;
And ice mast-high came floating by,
As green as emerald."—COLERIDGE.

"Now, Uncle Jack, we are all ready, if you please to tell us some of your adventures," said Augustus, as, after dinner on New Year's day, they were again assembled round the fire. It was the last evening at Middleford, for they were to start, after breakfast the next morning, for Clearburn Park, and the young sailor had promised to give an account of his shipwreck, which had occurred some years before.

"Well," said Uncle Jack, "about five years ago we were out on the Pacific, in the fine man-of-war called the *Neptune*. We had been cruising among the islands, and had touched at Tahiti and others, for cocoa nuts and bread fruit, and were coming home by Cape Horn. When we were in about fifty-eight degrees south latitude, and one hundred and seventy-six degrees of west longitude, we fell in with some enormous icebergs."

"*What* are icebergs?" inquired Beatrice.

"Icebergs," said Mr. Dudley, "are huge masses of floating ice, supposed to have detached themselves from still more enormous masses near the poles. They are often as high as two hundred feet above the surface of the ocean. Sometimes they have the appearance of castles on the summits of rocks, and when the sun shines upon them they are very beautiful, exhibiting all the colours of the rainbow. As the icebergs drift farther from the poles they melt away by degrees. We had an anxious time of it, for the snow flakes fell so thickly that often we could not see twenty yards from the ship. One night I was startled out of my sleep, by hearing an officer on watch call out, 'Three icebergs ahead, and one alongside.' Just at that moment a grating noise was heard; the ship seemed to shake and move uneasily, as if her keel had touched a rock. No doubt, it was ice beneath the waves. She was soon off, but we found she had sprung a leak. At first we did not think much of it, and hoped to be able to get home. It was, however, soon found that the leakage was more considerable that had been supposed, and it was decided not to attempt to round the cape, but to steer north, and put in at some port, where the *Neptune* could be examined. The weather became more favourable, and by hard pumping we were enabled to push on for nearly a fortnight. But then the wind changed, and the weather became stormy. We exerted ourselves to the utmost to put in at Valparaiso, but we were driven northward in the

gale, and the ship became unmanageable; she was filling fast, and there was nothing to be done but to abandon her, and take to the boats, throw into them a few bags of biscuits, small casks of water, and what provisions came in our way, and row off to the western coast of America.

"It was about two o'clock in the afternoon, when I heard Admiral Berington say, 'There's no chance for her, she will soon go down: lower the boats.' Every man was calm, and obeyed orders punctually; there was less confusion than could possibly have been expected at such an awful moment. The men showed much noble and generous feeling. The boats could not contain us all; some must share the fate of the ship, and with the greater part the strife was who should give up his chance of life to his comrade. One poor fellow stoutly refused to jump into the boat. 'I'm alone in the world,' he said; 'it will not signify to any one if I am lost; but these men have families depending on them for support.' All entreated the admiral to save himself, but his only answer was, 'I'll see my men safe first.'

"Three life-boats were manned; each contained from twenty to thirty men. A fourth smaller boat was then lowered, of which Selton was ordered to take the command, and I was desired to follow him. I felt very reluctant to leave poor Berington, but, seeing my hesitation, he peremptorily ordered me to obey, adding that every moment that I delayed *endangered* the life of a fellow creature. The water

in the ship was now up to our knees. There were still some men at the pumps, though it was evidently of no use. I jumped down the side of the vessel into the boat, in which there were eight besides myself: Lieutenant Selton, two midshipmen, and five men. We rowed for a few minutes, in a heavy sea, and had hardly got clear of the *Neptune*, when, just as a fifth boat was being manned, she sank, with the admiral and all the rest of the men, and was buried in the waves. It was indeed an awful sight, and one never to be forgotten, even if all on board that ill-fated ship had been strangers to us, or even our enemies. But, on the contrary, we were on good terms with all, and the admiral was universally beloved; besides which, the intrepid bravery of officers and men, their unselfish emulation to be the last to save themselves, made them heroes in our sight, as indeed they truly were, and a cry of anguish, mingled with feelings of admiration, rose from all the boats.

"But still greater horrors were in store for us. Two of the boats had been over-crowded, and went down before our eyes. Lieutenants Gordon and Charlton were in one, and Pownley and Glynn in the other, besides many brave men and three young midshipmen. The third boat was never heard of, so it must have sunk also. We who survived could almost have wished that we had shared our comrades' fate.

"We rowed by turns. After the second day we

had fine weather, and the wind was in our favour. We were on the look out for a ship, but did not sight one. Our rations were becoming smaller and smaller; the bags of biscuits were nearly empty, and the water cask also, so you may guess the gladness felt, when, on the ninth day, we saw land to the north. Our spirits rose, our thirst seemed to become more endurable, and we rowed on vigorously. When we approached nearer, we perceived that the island was one of those coral reefs, so dreaded by seamen in general, but which for us was our only chance of life."

"Stop a moment, please, Longshanks," said Uncle Fred, who, as usual, had Tumtin on his knee. "Stop a minute, for my bairn here wants to be informed whether the coral reef you landed on is like the coral ornament that she sports round her neck."

"Well, no, not very much, certainly, but it is a fact that the red coral, which is found in the Mediterranean, and which can receive a polish, and be converted into young ladies' necklaces and other ornaments, as well as the coral reefs of the Pacific, which sometimes extend thousands of miles, are formed by animals so tiny that they cannot be seen without a microscope."

"Do they work like the bees at their honeycomb?" inquired Margaret.

"Not at all, Maggie," replied her uncle; "I do not know whether I shall be able to make it clear to you, but I will try. They secrete a substance found *in sea water*, called carbonate of lime. This forms,

within their soft jelly-like bodies, the hard coral. When the zoophite, which means an animal resembling a plant, dies, the gelatinous coating, which is in fact the living animal, melts away, leaving the hard substance, which forms a very minute particle of a strong stem, which is the coral, and on which the living animals exist and grow; and, dying in their turn, their outer coating falls away, and they also add their mite to the hard stem. Then, as ages and ages roll by, the structure ever increases, until the bed of the ocean is filled up to within a few feet of the surface.

"This will give you some idea of the countless myriads of these zoophites, that extend their work for hundreds, nay, sometimes even for thousands, of miles. By degrees, the stems on which these multitudes of animalculæ have lived and died, and on which others continue the work, become, by time, pressure, and other causes, solid rock.

"The tiny animal cannot exist out of the salt water, so that the coral is never raised by its efforts above the level of the sea, but the waves of the ocean, constantly dashing against the reef, leave on its surface broken shells, sand, and other things. The mass of coral splits occasionally by the heat of the sun, and the waves, forcing themselves into the fissures, have power to raise large blocks, and precipitate them on the reef."

"How interesting all that is!" said Augustus; "but, Uncle Jack, I do not understand how an island,

formed in this way, gets planted with trees and flowers."

"Seeds are often wafted on the new island by the wind, or thrown on by the waves. Sea birds frequent it, and at last a soil is formed, on which, not only grass, but also the cocoa nut palms, and other trees, grow luxuriantly. But the red coral, which takes such a fine polish, and which is found chiefly in the Mediterranean and Red Seas, never increases so as to become a reef. It is not higher, generally speaking, than a diminutive shrub, and is procured by the coral fishermen. But to return to my story.

"The reef on which we landed is only a few miles in length, and about two in breadth. The first thing we did, when we found ourselves on terra firma, was to thank God for our deliverance. Frank Selton was our senior officer; he is, as you know, a Catholic. When he knelt down on the sandy rock, all the men followed his example, and we offered a truly heartfelt prayer. We then quenched our thirst with the milk of the cocoa nuts, which providentially abounded, and afterwards we took a walk round the island, on which we found tall palms of various kinds, and some other trees and plants.

"On the south-east coast we found several things which proved most useful to us,—and which told their tale of an unfortunate ship that must have been wrecked on the reef,—such as rope, a cask of water, a pickaxe, a hammer, a sail, boards, and a cabin *door.*

"The ship's carpenter was among the saved, and, aided by the other men, he built a capital hut. I assure you, that, had it not been for the loss of our shipmates, we should really have enjoyed our Crusoe adventures. We found lots of turtle's eggs; and as a tin box, containing flint and tinder, turned out of one fellow's pocket, we made a fire of all the rubbish we could collect, and roasted the eggs in the embers. I helped Selton to construct a wooden cross, and we planted it on a little rising ground near the shore. On Saturday evening Selton spoke to the men, and told them that he would say prayers aloud on Sunday, at nine o'clock in the morning, and at three in the afternoon: that as they were all Protestants, excepting him and myself, he obliged no one to attend, but he exhorted them to spend those half hours in prayer.

"At the appointed time, we were all assembled, kneeling round the cross. Not one man was missing; and I assure you that Selton made an excellent clergyman. I must say, too, for our honest Jack Tars, that during the twenty-two days we were on the reef, they conducted themselves like Christian men. Thank God we had no strong drinks! The small quantity of grog we had carried away from the *Neptune* had been consumed while we were in the open boat, so that was a temptation out of the way."

"Were you afraid you would have to stay on the island all your life?" inquired Edward.

"No; I do not suppose that any of us entertained

that thought. We knew that we were not very far from the American coast, and we were constantly on the look out for whalers."

"What are whalers?" asked Marion.

"Ships that are manned for the purpose of killing whales, for the sake of the oil which is called train oil."

"And for the whalebone, also, I suppose," said Beatrice.

"Yes, but the sperm whales of the Southern latitudes do not possess it. The whalebone, of which you ladies make so much use, is found chiefly in the Greenland whale, and is attached to the palate of the animal.

"We christened the reef St. Francis's Island, as he was the patron saint of our talented and popular lieutenant. Of course, we could not tell how long we might have to stay, so we took our precautions, and on Monday we set to work making water holes in the rocks and soil with the pickaxe, each taking his turn at the work, so that when it rained we might save as much water as possible, for it was all we had to depend on when the cask was empty. God was very merciful to us, and after a short tropical shower or two we were supplied abundantly.

"Every day Mr. Selton, our chief, as we called him, said public morning and night prayers. Happily one of the men had saved a gun, and some powder and shot, and this we now found most useful. *We daily went* out and shot down a few sea birds for

our meals. I don't think we should have found them very palatable at an English picnic, without either bread or salt, but 'hunger is the best sauce,' and we feasted on them, and on the eggs, very cheerfully. On calm days we went out for a row, vainly hoping to catch a sight of the missing boat. Once we saw a sail in the distance, but she soon disappeared. We rowed for half the day, hoping to come up with her, but all to no purpose, and we had to give it up and return to our quarters.

"In this manner three weeks passed away, and by that time we had made ourselves pretty comfortable. Our hut was built under the shade of some palm trees, and we used some of their magnificent leaves as parasols; some of the men formed them into hats, which shaded us from the intense heat. I told you that Mr. Selton had erected a wooden cross, and that we often knelt at its foot, and offered our prayers of praise and supplication to God. I will now tell you how the Almighty rewarded those little acts of love, and in His sweet providential mercy chose to make that very cross an instrument in His hands to liberate us.

"One night there was a terrible storm. Several cocoa nut palms were uprooted, and every moment we expected that our cabin would be destroyed. The men seemed downcast and discouraged, though they showed it more in looks than in words.

"'Trust in God,' said our gallant lieutenant; 'His ways are unfathomable, but they are always holy,

just and true. He has sent this storm for some wise end; let us adore and bless His divine Providence.' These simple words reassured the men at once. Selton's faith and cheerful piety were irresistible. He is one in a thousand; a rare example to Catholics and to all Christians, as well as an ornament to the navy: would that there were many like him.

"You may imagine that, after such a night, we were a little lazy in the morning; and two hours after sunrise every man amongst us was sleeping soundly. Suddenly we were aroused by shouts at a little distance. We started up, and listened attentively with suspended breath. Yes, there really were shouts—shouts from the lungs of our fellow men!

"It was the work of a minute to rush out of the hut, when, to our joyful surprise, we beheld a fine ship, as near to our reef as it was possible for her to approach. Moreover, on the island itself, and standing by the cross, were five men. We hallooed with all our might, and received for answer such cheering that it almost rings in my ears now. They hastened to meet us; the captain, who was a nice pleasant man, was amongst them, and we found that his vessel was a merchantman bound for London. Our tale was soon told, and we received a most hearty invitation to berths on board the *Ocean Star*.

"Our deliverers informed us that the storm had driven them out of their course, and at daybreak *they discovered* that they were close to our reef.

They were about to tack, when one of the sailors on the rigging noticed the cross, and pointed it out to the captain. He at once caused a boat to be lowered, and came in it himself, with four rowers, to see if there was any inscription on it, stating by whom, or on what occasion, it had been erected. On landing, they perceived our cabin, and also unmistakeable signs of a recent gipsy-like fire. They then gave out those uproarious shouts which had roused us from our sleep.

"Before we left the island, Captain Gurnham sent the boat back to '*The Ocean Star*,' for potatoes and Indian corn, which we sowed here and there, hoping that they would grow and serve as food, should any ship again be wrecked there.

"Then, after offering a fervent act of thanksgiving for our deliverance, we took our departure; but before we reached the ship, we all gave three cheers for St. Francis's Island.

"Nothing could exceed the kindness and attention of Captain Gurnham and all on board, during our voyage home. We recovered our strength, and arrived safely in England, where, amidst the joy occasioned by our escape, there were many lamentations over the fate of our gallant admiral and our companions, as well as for the loss of the good ship *Neptune*."

"Well, really; I should be afraid of going to America, for fear of being wrecked on a coral island," said Beatrice.

"You might make fifty voyages to America," replied her uncle, "and not meet with a single coral reef—they are very rare indeed in the Atlantic. It is in the Pacific Ocean that they abound. Moreover, they are scarcely ever met with beyond the tropics, as the little creatures cannot live in very cold water; neither are the reefs ever formed in a very deep sea."

CHAPTER XII.

THE JOURNEY.

"O'er the aqueduct and bog,
On we fly with ceaseless jog;
Every instant something new,
Every moment lost to view:
Now a tavern—now a steeple,—
Now a crowd of gaping people,—
Now a hollow—now a ridge,—
Now a crossway—now a bridge."

POEMS FOR THE YOUNG.

The next morning, at ten o'clock, the large barouche was at the door, laden with carriage boxes, packed by Mrs. Smeakle, whose talents in that line no one could equal. At the half-hour, the "fleet," as uncle Jack said, "was under weigh." Mrs. Tresham, Smeakle, Marion, and baby, were inside. *Mr. Tresham* on the box, and Teresa the nursery *maid, and a* man servant, sat behind. Off they set

with four post horses, followed by two post chaises and pairs. The first containing Uncle Fred and his two elder neices; the second, Uncle Jack and the two boys. A merrier set of travellers never was seen. The carriages reached the hotels, where they changed horses, about half an hour before the chaises, so when the children arrived at the town where they were to dine, they found everything ready waiting for them.

As it was in the winter, Mr. Tresham did not continue the first day's journey beyond Dunstable, which they reached about four o'clock. The rooms at the hotel had been previously engaged; and as they passed through the town twice every year, to and from Clearburn, the landlord knew pretty well what would be required.

At whatever town the family stopped, Mrs. Smeakle liked to impress on the childrens' minds the manufactures or other things for which it might be famed; and so, at Dunstable, she made it an unvarying rule that they should have larks with their tea, and never failed to remind them of the old woman who sat in the hall of the inn selling straw baskets; but this was scarcely necessary, and so many tempting articles were purchased, that when Marion followed her mother into the carriage the next morning, what with nick-knacks she had bought herself, and those her uncles had given her, she had about as many as she could look after.

"*If our wheat* comes up nicely, mamma," said

she, when they were once more on the road, "shall we be able to get a basket or a hat made of the straw?"

"No, dear," replied her mother; "straw is not good enough in all places to be made use of in that manner. It requires a soil particularly adapted for it, as it is at Dunstable and at some other places, especially in Tuscany; but it is useful in other ways, for it is laid down in the stables for the horses and cows; and many poor people, in large towns especially, would have to sleep on the boards, or even on the cold stones, were it not for straw,—and even this cannot be had by all."

"Poor things! I should like to be very rich, and buy them all some mattresses. But the Indians are much worse off, for I read in one of Peter Parley's books, that they sleep on the grass and eat roots."

"As to the roots, Marion, we eat them also, though not all of them uncooked, like the savages. Turnips, carrots, and parsnips, are all roots; and some we eat raw, such as radishes."

"And the potato, mamma; but we cook that."

"Yes, but the potato is not the root of the plant, it is an underground stem, and is called a tuber. The fruit is poisonous, but the stem and leaves are used in medicine. Indeed, the plants that are employed medicinally, are numberless."

"We eat the leaves of some plants, do we not, mamma?"

"*Yes, such* as spinach, cabbage, and lettuce. We

eat the stem and branches of others, as rhubarb and celery; and the blossom of some, as cauliflower. Some flowers are distilled for various purposes; and an infusion is made of camomile flowers."

"Oh, yes, indeed I have tasted it: but camomile tea is not at all nice, mamma."

"No, it has a bitter taste, but it is a good medicine. Then, as to the fruit of plants, which you like better, there are apples, plums, apricots, and many others. And we eat the seeds of some plants, such as peas and beans. Mustard is the seed of the mustard plant ground to powder; and when you have linseed tea for a cold, it is, as the name implies, made of the seeds."

"Bread is made of the seed of wheat; and sago is the seed of a plant, is it not, mamma?"

"No, dear, sago is not the seed, but the pith of a species of palm tree, that grows in warm climates, and is prepared in a particular way. So you see that various parts of different plants are useful to man; but to the plant itself every part is not only useful, but necessary. The roots suck in water, which is converted within the plant into sap, and conveyed to the stem, the branches, the leaves, the flowers, and the fruit; nourishing all, and enabling the plant to live and grow. After rising to the top, the sap descends through the bark, nourishing that also."

"Is the bark of any use to the plant, mamma?"

"Oh, yes, of great use. It protects the stem, and prevents its being frozen in winter. If the stem

were frozen the plant would die, for then the sap would not rise. The bark is also of great use to man, for, after it has been stripped from the tree, it is put into water, and after soaking there for a long time, the liquor becomes tan, which is used for making leather. That is to say, the skins of beasts, such as sheep and oxen, are left for a long time in the tan, and, by degrees, they are converted into leather."

"I should like to learn all about plants, mamma."

"It is a very interesting study, Marion, and the more we learn of the wonders and beauties of nature, the more we ought to love and adore the God of nature, who has made all things so beautiful and perfect."

In this manner Marion chatted with her mother, and whenever there was anything worth seeing on the road, Mr. Tresham would call their attention to it. As for the uncles, and the nephews and nieces, in the chaises, their laughter and noise was somewhat uproarious, though Gussie and Edward declared afterwards, that it would have been much more fun if they had had an adventure, such as the horses running away, or the carriage upsetting, or something of that sort; whilst Mrs. Tresham thanked God that nothing of the sort had occurred.

CHAPTER XIII.

CLEARBURN.

"Oh, merry are the village bells, that sound with soothing chime,
From the dim old tower, grown grey beneath the shadowy touch of time;
And gaily are they borne along upon the summer air,
Telling of bridal happiness to the youthful and the fair:
They give a murmur of delight to earth, and sky, and seas,
That mingles with the running streams, and floats upon the breeze."—E. CARRINGTON.

"Bless you, Master Jennings! Why, what brings you here at this hour?" said Mrs. Baker, a clean, tidy, little woman, to whose care, it will be remembered, Mrs. Tresham had confided little Mary Forrester. There she stood, at the door of her pretty cottage, with her best gown and tucker on, and looking as good humoured as it was possible to look. "Why, man," she continued, "whatever is ye a thinking on? You'll never be at church in time to ring. I expect to see the carriage driving up every minute."

"They ain't a coming this hour, Mrs. Baker," answered the man thus accosted. "I'se just come from the house, and I heared say as they's not expected until four o'clock, an' it ain't gone three yet.

Catch me a being too late to ring a welcome to our Miss Mary. We rang a peal—oh, what a peal it was! on her wedding day, fourteen years ago come May day; though we was all dull enough to think of losing on her, with her good gentle ways. I thinks I sees her now, God bless her, as she was a leaning on her husbin's arm, and saying the kindly word to all on us. And he, God bless him too! looking every bit worthy on her; a gentleman every inch on him, with his fine noble face, and his good honest heart. I'se heared say as no one ever knowed him to speak an uncharitable word to no one. He's that tender hearted that he wouldn't hurt a fly if he could help it; and all his servants loves the very ground he treads on, 'cept the gardener, who's always a grumbling at him like, because he won't let him shoot none of them little finches as takes all the fruit they can get; nor will he as much as let an egg in the nests be disturbed. 'Pooh, pooh,' he says, 'let 'em eat the fruit if they likes it; there's enough for them and for us.'"

"And he's right enough there, Master Jennings. My father was a large farmer, and I've heard him say as it's all a mistake to be a killing of them birds, for they does more good a eating of insects than they does harm by the little fruit as they takes."

"Well, well, Mrs. Baker, I don't know nothing about that: but I was a saying as we rang the bells on Miss Mary's wedding day, and we've rung 'em *every year* since, when she comes with her husbin

and children to see the old squire. And the first time Mr. Tresham wanted to be a giving us gold sovereigns, but we were that hurt that he durstn't try it again, for it would be paying us like. And we says to him, 'Sir, it's for love as we rings, and not for money;' and he says, says he, 'I believes ye, but you won't refuse the supper?' And says we, 'No, we'll thank ye for the supper, because that gives us the sight of ye.' For he always comes in and says, says he, 'Thank ye all; and ye did ring a merry welcome to us; and Miss Mary bids me thank ye.' He always says Miss Mary to us that night, for he knows as we never could get round a calling of her Mrs. Tresham. And we says to him, 'Please, sir, to tell Miss Mary, with our dooty, as we've rung with all our hearts.' And he says, 'Yes, that I will, for I knows ye did, and she'll come and see ye all in your own cottages before long.' And so she does; and doesn't pass a week afore she's been, God bless her. If all Catholics was like them folks, why, I'd be one on ye to-morrow; but they ain't."

"Then I wonders why you stays a Protestant, seeing as how there's plenty of bad uns amongst ye as well. Ah, master, remember that amongst the twelve apostles there was one willain, and so it ain't surprising if there's some bad Catholics among the millions as is in the world. But that's neither here nor there, for it's the faith we must look to, and think that if we Catholics lived up to what we know to be right, and what our Church teaches, we'd all be

saints; and if we're not, it's our own individual fault, and not the fault of the Church which was founded by our Lord. I ain't no controversialist, as Father Mildmay calls it, but I know that the Church can't go wrong, for Christ promised she shouldn't. So when you Protestants protested against her, you protested against God Himself. Mark my words: them as is good, is them as lives up to the Church's teaching; and them as is bad, is them as doesn't live up to the Church's teaching; so that's all about it."

"Well, I won't gainsay ye, for I believe as you're right, and I'll think about it when I've a bit of time."

"Don't put off, Master Jennings; for remember that delays is dangerous," said Mrs. Baker, as the good man went to the church to ring.

Clearburn Park was a second home to the Tresham family, going there, as they did, every year for two or three months at a time. The house was large and straggling. One part of it was Elizabethan, but a modern house had been added, so that the older one was devoted entirely to nurseries, school rooms, and offices. Mr. and Mrs. Tresham also had their apartments there, as they liked to be near their children. Mr. Dudley was a remarkably fine old man, in his eightieth year. Tall, handsome, and perfectly erect, he still continued to ride twelve or fourteen miles every day on horseback. He loved to see his grandchildren enjoy themselves, and thoroughly understood that children cannot be happy, if they do not *make a noise*. In this he was a contrast to the prim

yet good-natured grandmamma, a plain thin little woman, with a warm affectionate heart, but no outward attractions. She did not in the least understand what fun could be found in jumping, shouting, and romping about, yet she not only permitted, but encouraged, all sorts of amusements, in which she could not sympathise herself. She used to say, "Well, well, it is a strange thing, but as children now-a-days will make a noise, we must let them make it, for I should not like them to dread coming here, which they certainly would do if we tried to damp their spirits."

There was no fear of any spirits being damped at Clearburn, and when, on the evening of their arrival, the old couple sat, one at each end of the table, surrounded by their children and grandchildren, it may be said, without fear of mistake, that a happier party never met. Uncle Jack, too, being the youngest son, and having braved so many dangers, was the pride and darling of his parents. How many nicknames did he rejoice in? Five at least, namely, Longshanks, Honest Jack Tar, Uncle Jack, Benjamin, and Essential; the last having been given him by his brothers. Wherever he was, there fun and mirth were also, as an unexceptional rule.

Arthur, the eldest son, was married, and had three little children. His wife was the only daughter of an Irishman of large landed property, near Dublin, who, as he was getting very old, and had lost his wife, could hardly bear to be separated from

his child, so they had spent a great part of the year at his country house. Now, however, they were all at Clearburn for the Christmas holidays, so the old place was undoubtedly alive. Mrs. Arthur Dudley was clever and amiable, and much liked by everybody.

Good kind Father Mildmay joined the family circle, enlivening all with his cheerfulness. The young ones found no enjoyment at Clearburn in which he was not a partaker. Many times a day little feet might have been heard pattering up and down the old oak staircase that led to his rooms. Whether they wanted to ride or walk, to fish or skate, to shoot at the target, or to ramble through the woods, or to search for fossils in the gravel pits, he was always ready to join them, always bright and cheerful; always contributing to the general enjoyment of every one within reach of his assistance, or within the sound of his kind encouraging voice. None of his congregation ever had a trouble or a joy that they did not at once seek Father Mildmay, to tell him all, and were sure to find comfort and sympathy. Ever the same, never tired of doing good, never offended, he shewed impartial kindness to all, with such wonderful tact, that in doing the will of others it appeared as if he was doing his own; though every one but a superficial observer knew that he had no will of his own. Straight he went on his road to heaven, unselfish and single-hearted, *respected by* all, the very model of a priest who

loved God above all things, and his neighbour as himself.

"The lesson books will not be unpacked before the Epiphany, I hope, Mary," said Mr. Dudley to his daughter, when, hand in hand, the little ones came in to dessert. "You will give the bairns a few days, will you not, to look about the old place," continued he, watching the various countenances, and the effect his words would have on the young ones.

"Hallos, what's that?" put in Uncle Jack; "I second that motion, for it seems a good one."

Whereupon there was a general laugh, a chorus of "Thank you, grandpapa," and the thing was settled, for no one thought or wished to oppose the old man's will.

CHAPTER XIV.

GRANDPAPA'S TRICK.

"Come to me, O ye children!
For I hear you at your play,
And the questions that perplexed me,
Have vanished quite away.
For what are all our contrivings,
And the wisdom of our books,
When compared with your caresses
And the gladness of your looks?"

LONGFELLOW.

On Monday, which was the Epiphany, the altar in the little chapel was prettily decorated, and when all, rich and poor, old and young, were joining in the "Adeste Fideles," and in the "O Salutaris Hostia!" and "Tantum Ergo," which had been taught to the congregation by their zealous pastor, there was no one who did not agree in feeling that this kind of singing speaks more to the heart than a grander or more artistic style has power to do.

After Benediction, little Mary Forrester was sent for to the school-room, for Mrs. Tresham and her children were anxious to see her, and to try on the new clothes they had made for her. They found her looking well and happy, and very neat and clean. *Mrs.* Baker seemed quite fond of the child, who

evidently returned her affection, and seemed comfortable in her new home, though the tears came into her eyes when her mother's name was mentioned, and she said she would never never forget her, but prayed for her every day.

Plenty of amusement had been planned for the evening, and grandpapa seemed to be especially mysterious. He had been seen in the store-room, and, upon being asked by his wife if he was going to turn housekeeper, would give no answer; whereupon curiosity had been greatly raised.

At dessert a twelfth cake of a moderate size was placed before Mrs. Dudley. "Dear me," said she, in a tone of disappointment, "I ordered a much larger cake than this:" but on looking up she saw the footman bringing in another of such huge dimensions, that he could scarcely help smiling.

"Good gracious!" cried the old lady, "has Dullard taken leave of her senses? It's true I did tell her to make a large cake, but that is a monster!"

"It's all right; put it down before me," said Mr. Dudley, quietly. "It's a large cake, and a *rich pound* cake, and it's I who ordered it; and, what's more, I gave Dullard wherewith to make a very rich cake."

"Oh, my dear, how could you do that? Don't you know that rich things are very bad for children? I ordered a plain one expressly. Well, to be sure! Grandpapa turned housekeeper." Mrs. Dudley laughed heartily, and every one joined her.

The old man enjoyed the fun. "I tell you," said he, "to cut up that small cake amongst you grown up folks; we young ones will keep this one all to ourselves."

"I should have thought you knew as much about making a plum cake, father, as King George the Third knew about how an apple got into a dumpling," was the remark of Uncle Jack.

"Don't make impertinent speeches, sir. If I had been cast on a desert island, like you, I should have known quite as well how to manage. Now, Augustus, my boy, you are my eldest grandchild, as well as my godson and namesake, so you shall begin to cut the cake, for I intend every one to eat his or her own piece, and I will mark out the size the pieces are to be."

"I can't cut through it, grandpapa," said Augustus, "something hard stops the knife."

"Ah, ah, that's it, is it? Then let me guide your hand a little to the right."

The piece of cake was cut out, and found to contain, not only

"Sugar and spice,
And all things nice,"

But a bright golden sovereign and half-a-crown shining amongst the currants.

"There," said the old gentleman, chuckling and clapping his hands, "now tell me again that I don't *know how* to make a *rich* pound cake."

It was in fact a money cake, and great fun and laughter followed the discovery. Edward was the next to cut, and he found in his piece two five-shilling pieces and half-a-guinea. The cake contained two sovereigns, four half-sovereigns, four five-shilling pieces, four half-crowns, and ten shillings. Beatrice won the second sovereign. Little Willie Dudley and Margaret Tresham got each half-a-guinea and some shillings. Marion got a five-shilling piece and four shillings, and grandpapa cut for little Laura and Frank Dudley, and also for Aloysius Tresham, who got the remainder of the money, which, as they were so young, was given to their mothers to buy them some toys. Grandpapa was duly thanked, not only for the money, but for the amusement caused by his trick.

Mr. Dudley liked to give his grandchildren pocket money now and then, and Mr. Tresham approved of their having a moderate supply, for many reasons. It not only taught them the value of money and things, but it gave them opportunities of giving pleasure to others, of making sacrifices, such as refraining now and then from buying some toy or book that they wanted, in order to be able to make little presents to a brother or sister, or to give away something in charity. It gave him also an opportunity of watching the dispositions of his children, and of checking any miserly or selfish tendencies that might show themselves, as well as any inclination to extravagance.

After dessert the whole party went into the hall for snapdragon, the most amusing part of which was that, when the raisins were all taken out of the dishes, salt was thrown into the burning brandy, which gave out a blue flame and made them all look like ghosts.

The next day a treat was given to the children of the village school. A holiday was proclaimed, the school was cleared of desks, large tables were placed in it, and Miss Smallbone, the mistress, was very busy all the morning, making everything look as nice as she could. With the help of some of the elder girls she manufactured two splendid banners, and decorated the walls with wreaths of evergreens.

Plates, knives, and forks, and other requisites, with all the good things, were sent from the "Big House," and at twelve o'clock Mrs. Arthur Dudley and Mrs. Tresham went to preside at the cutting up of the roast beef and plum pudding, which their children distributed to all the little hungry boys and girls.

Old Mr. and Mrs. Dudley came and looked on, and all the school children cheered them three times three. At the end of dinner they sang some songs and hymns, and then played in the field until four o'clock, when they were again summoned to the school room, to be regaled with tea and buttered toast, after which they dispersed to their homes, each child carrying a present of a strong pair of new *boots.*

CHAPTER XV.

THE ORPHANAGE.

"Poor orphans we are; though no more by that name
We seek kind protection and pity to claim:
Those days of affliction are past;
For Jesus has spoken to hearts all His own,
Who seek but His glory, who love Him alone,
And we have a shelter at last."—ANON.

About a week after the feast, the small-pox broke out in the village, and all communication with it was consequently cut off. No more long walks could be taken, and the children were forbidden to go beyond the park gates. Subscriptions were raised, and all the neighbouring gentry contributed, so that a handsome sum was collected, to help to pay for medical attendance, medicines, and also for good nourishment for those who were getting well. Notwithstanding all care, however, the ravages made by the dreadful disease were fearful. More than thirty families were struck down in less than a fortnight, and amongst them were good Mrs. Baker and her husband.

One morning Mr. Dudley came in to breakfast looking very sorrowful. Baker had died during the night. He had worked on the estate since he was a

boy of twelve, and had always been a steady faithful servant. He had left eight children, three of whom were ill, and his wife was dying. Jennings, the warm-hearted bell-ringer, was also on his deathbed. He had sent for Father Mildmay, and had been received into the Church.

The sufferers now formed the chief subject of conversation, and the greatest compassion was felt and expressed for the poor little things, who would be left orphans. Mr. and Mrs. Tresham, as well as Mr. and Mrs. Dudley, began to feel a little uneasy also for their own families, and thought it unsafe to remain any longer at Clearburn, and being also strongly recommended to leave the neighbourhood, they arranged to start on the following Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Jennings made his first and last communion in most enviable dispositions, and died on the same day. Poor Mrs. Baker received the last rites of the Church a few hours later, and on being told that Jennings had died a good Catholic, her countenance lit up with joy, and with the words "Thank God" on her lips, she expired.

On the next Sunday evening, the last for some time that the Treshams were to spend at Clearburn, Mr. Dudley sent for his daughter to the library, where he usually passed his time when indoors.

"Mary," said he, when Mrs. Tresham entered the room, "I want to talk to you about a plan that was running in my head all last night. I could not rest *for thinking* of all those poor little children, left

homeless and fatherless by the small-pox. I have counted them over and over. Poor Baker left eight, and out of those only the two elder boys are old enough to support themselves. I will take them both to work on the farm. Then the Grucocks left six children, and of those, four girls are under seven years old. Smith left ten children and a sickly widow. I don't exactly remember how many girls there are."

"Six, I think," replied Mrs. Tresham; "two of them can work at the lace trade, but the other four are almost infants, and the two youngest are twins."

"You are right. Bugby, poor fellow, is recovering, but it will be long enough before he is able to return to his work. He has five young children, and the wife is dying. Then there is poor Beckey Huff: she is better, but stone blind, I hear."

"I am afraid the disease is not subsiding, father."

"No; I hear of fresh cases every day. We must do something for all those poor children. The parson said, yesterday, that they must go to the workhouse. Ah, ah! thought I, he may do what he likes with his own, of course; but my resolution is fixed and determined. Not one Catholic child shall go there to lose its faith. No!" added the old Squire, earnestly; "we must guard and keep the little lambs of the fold, and not let the wolf prey upon them. It is for this I have sent for you, Mary, to tell you that my plan is to build an orphanage. It can be done for less than two thousand pounds. I

will give up the field at the back of the old garden; it is more suitable for building purposes than for pasture; and you must help me to look out for a respectable motherly sort of a person, to act as matron."

"With all my heart, father. I think your idea is an excellent one, and quite feasible. It will bring down blessings on us all, and we shall take a deep interest in its success. You have spoken to Arthur, I suppose?"

"Yes; and he, like a dear good fellow, thanked me over and over again, and wanted to add a thousand pounds of his own, but I wouldn't take it from him. He insisted, however, on subscribing twenty-four pounds a year, which will support two orphans; and as Frederick and Jack will each give twelve pounds, and you support little Mary Forrester, there are five already provided for. Amongst them all, there are only three lads who are too young to work, and those I will try and get into Riverdale's Free Orphanage for Boys. I intend to lay by five hundred pounds every year while I live; and Arthur will do the same when I am gone, until the whole is endowed."

"By and by, you may perhaps make it to a certain extent self-supporting, especially if the lace trade continues good."

"Very true, that will be a help. I will write at once to Hugley, and tell him to draw out a plan; and I do not see why it should not be begun this

spring. In the meantime, what is to be done with the children?"

"Could you not ask Mrs. Goodenough to take charge of them, father? I had to withdraw the washing on account of the small-pox, so I dare say it would be a help to her, and the house is a good large one."

"A capital thought, Mary. She is a kind-hearted woman; and has been going from house to house, giving all the assistance she could to those who needed it. I will see Goodenough about it at once. They are good, honest Catholics, and have brought up their own family well."

Mr. Dudley was a man of his word. What he said, he meant. So he set about the orphanage without delay, and with such energy, that in less than two months after his wakeful night of planning and scheming, not only were twenty poor little destitute children taken into comfortable homes, and cared for with affection, but the foundations of the future orphanage were dug, and the day was fixed for laying the first stone by the good old Squire himself.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ARRIVAL.

"The winter has passed with its frowns away,
And the beautiful spring is coming;
The children are out in the fields at play,
And the bees round the flow'rets humming;
It seems as if spring, with her balmy breath,
Hath wakened all things from their sleep of death."

THE PARTHENON.

Easter had come at last. Bright, joyous Easter; and to the severe winter had succeeded an unusually fine warm spring. The birds were singing, and busily building their nests. The childrens' little wheat fields were flourishing, and gave promise of a plentiful harvest. Snowdrops and crocuses had disappeared; but, in their stead, the gardens were gay with beautiful spring flowers. The yellow daffodil, the polyanthus, primroses and cowslips, sweet scented wallflowers and violets, were blossoming in profusion. In every little plot belonging to the children might be seen mustard and cress, coming up in the form of a P for papa, and M for mamma; the strife being whose would be ready to cut first, and send in to their parents for breakfast.

"*Look*, Marion," cried Beatrice, one lovely morn-

ing, when the children were working at their gardens, "look, I have gathered my last polyanthus. I think Mrs. Carrington will like them, she is so fond of flowers, you know. Mamma is going to put a bouquet upon her dressing-table, and has been cutting some geraniums in the greenhouse. I will run and ask her if we may make a separate nosegay from our own gardens."

"Stay, Trissey, take these violets with you. Mamma is preparing a little oratory for Mrs. Carrington, something like those we have in our rooms, only larger and grander. There is such a lovely crucifix on the table; and Maggie asked me to gather all her violets to put into her china basket. Oh, hark! I hear the sound of wheels. Yes, there she is, I'm sure. I see a post chaise driving up to the house."

Spades and rakes were abandoned; and in a few minutes more Mrs. Carrington had clasped in a warm embrace, first one, and then another, of the children of her dearest friend.

"I declare I should scarcely know them all, they are so much grown," said she, as arm-in-arm she went upstairs with Mrs. Tresham. "I should like to see baby, please, even before I take off my bonnet."

"You must be very tired. I will send for him when you are rested."

"Oh no, thank you, it will rest me to see him."

"Well then," said Mrs. Tresham to Beatrice, who was following with a shawl, "run and tell Smeakle

to bring Ally at once. He is beginning to be so engaging, and takes such notice," she continued, addressing Mrs. Carrington.

"Who is he like?"

"He is the image of his father. That is, he perfectly resembles the portraits that were taken of him when he was a child."

"Then he must be a beautiful boy. Ah, there he is. How do you do, Smeakle? I am so glad to see you again. Give me the dear baby, I must have him all to myself. Oh yes, he is decidedly like Mr. Tresham; there's his high forehead and curly hair, only it's a little lighter. And there's the bump of benevolence, I do declare. He will soon begin to know me, I hope."

Mrs. Carrington had married at the early age of twenty, but after three short years of uninterrupted happiness, her husband died suddenly. To add to her misfortunes, the bank in which Mr. Carrington had been a sleeping partner failed almost immediately after his death; and ruin to his widow was an inevitable consequence. Happily, she had been religiously brought up, and knew where to look for consolation.

Mr. Wilmot, her father, died a few years after her husband; and, owing to some failures in his West Indian plantations, had left but very trifling and insufficient incomes to his widow and three children. His son Andrew sailed soon after for Barbadoes, *hoping to* recover, if possible, some of the property;

and Mrs. Carrington, having lost both her little ones, and being anxious to assist her mother and invalid sister, by enabling them to procure those comforts to which they had been accustomed, and which their failing health required, resolved to undertake a situation as governess.

It cost her many a struggle to make up her mind to take this step. But hers was a brave and generous nature, and she did not shrink from the arduous and self-imposed task. As soon as her intentions became known, many mothers were desirous of engaging her valuable services, but to Mrs. Tresham she gave the preference. The two families had been, for some years past, on intimate terms of friendship; and Mrs. Wilmot was a constant visitor at Clearburn, so that it was more in the light of a friend and companion, than as a stranger, that Mrs. Tresham welcomed Mrs. Carrington to Middleford.

A few days after her arrival she was installed in the schoolroom, where she made the improvement and happiness of her pupils her constant aim. She studied their different characters, stimulated them to exertion, and by patience and perseverance brought them steadily on.

Margaret was her chief difficulty. Naturally indolent, she had fallen into such a habit of attempting nothing that gave her trouble, that at last she became persuaded that the words difficult and impossible meant the same thing. Seeing that she could not learn her lessons as quickly as her sister,

she foolishly imagined she could not learn them at all, and fell into a state of discouragement which hindered her progress. Nothing is so baneful as this disposition; it has the appearance of humility, but in reality it springs from self-love, and is very dangerous. It is true that, at target shooting, fishing, nay, climbing, and all out-door sports, Margaret could be energetic enough, and, when tired, would sit on a low branch of a tall cedar tree, and read story books by the hour. It was only in the school-room that she was listless and idle, for, if the truth must be told, she disliked everything that gave her trouble. And so it was, that, unknown to herself, she increased her difficulties ten-fold, and did not advance as much as she would otherwise have done.

Beatrice, on the other hand, was one of those model children that we meet with now and then. Bright, joyous, and blessed with a good capacity, she succeeded in all she undertook; and, moreover, she was so sweet tempered and gentle, so docile and unconscious of her attractive qualities, that she was beloved by every one.

"It's no use trying any more, Mrs. Carrington, this sum won't come right; there's something the matter with it," groaned Margaret, one morning, after she had sat for half an hour with her slate before her, and her pencil in her hand, muttering to herself the well-known lines:

"Multiplication is vexation,
Division is as bad;
The rule of three does puzzle me,
And practice drives me mad;"

While her governess was giving a music lesson to her sister. "Long division sums always come wrong; I don't see any use in them at all," she continued, with a sigh, heavy enough to express any depth of misery.

"Leave it, then, until I can attend to you, Maggie," said Mrs. Carrington; "but I cannot help thinking that if you had a little more patience and perseverance, and if you would give your mind to it seriously, for five minutes, the difficulty would vanish. I suspect your thoughts are anywhere but in your arithmetic," added she, smiling.

With a little help the provoking sum came right at last, and a good run round the garden before dinner drove away all unpleasant recollections of its perplexities.

"I understand," said Mrs. Carrington, at dinner time, "that sometimes you go to see poor Mary Grey, and take her some little delicacy, to tempt her to eat."

"Oh, yes; we often go, and we like it very much," said Beatrice.

"I am glad you do, for your mother gives us permission, in future, to dispose of whatever may remain of pudding or pie, at our dinner: and every

fine day we can go together to the Green or village, and give it to some poor person who stands in need of such help. Afterwards, we can continue our walk. What do you say to this plan, my dears?"

"It is delightful," cried all the children.

"We have not got a very nice basket; it is nearly worn out," observed Marion.

"But," interrupted Margaret, "mamma said, the other day, that we might get Blind Tommy to make a new one for us, with a lid. Do let us go and order it to-day, Mrs. Carrington."

"Very well, so we will. And we must ask Mrs. Thomas to give us a pudding basin, or a dish that will fit in the basket. I have got two nice cloths to cover over the dish, which I intend to mark 'School-room;' and whoever says her lessons the best, shall have the honour of carrying the basket."

This little plan met with universal approbation, and was carried on energetically on all fine days when the children were in the country.

"Oh, mamma!" cried Beatrice, the next morning, "the silkworms' eggs are hatched, and a quantity of little black creatures are crawling about on the white paper tray."

"Then run for a few young mulberry leaves, dear," said Mrs. Tresham, "and I will show you what to do."

"They are hatched—the silkworms are hatched," shouted Beatrice to her brothers, as she ran across the hall with her hat in her hand.

"Where are they to be seen?"

"In papa's old dressing-room, on the window seat. The eggs have been there for a fortnight in the sun, and I am going for some young mulberry leaves. Come and help me to pick them."

The news spread like wildfire, and in a few minutes the children were all crowding round their mother, and watching her as she gently laid down a few young leaves on the paper tray, where the little black grubs were crawling.

"Oh, mamma, I am afraid they will not see them; do let me lift them up and put them on the leaves," said Marion.

"To do so would be to kill them," said her mother; "even though you have such tiny fingers, Marion. But watch them for a few minutes, and you will find that they will soon discover the food. Almighty God, in creating these wonderful little animals, has given to them, as well as to all others, an instinct, which is a power to take care of themselves, and of their young."

"Oh, yes, mamma," said Beatrice, "we were learning all about that the other day; and that man is superior to all the other animals, because he has an immortal soul, endowed with understanding and reason, which are much better than instinct."

"But," said Augustus, "the silkworm moth is not here to take care of these horrid little black grubs."

"No," replied his mother; "moths and butter-

flies do not live to see their eggs hatched; their instinct is to lay them on something that is good for them to eat, so that, as soon as they are hatched, they find their food. The silkworm could not live out of doors in our cold climate; so those who like to keep a few for amusement must provide their food for them."

"May we have them in the schoolroom, mamma?" asked Margaret.

"No, dear; it is not wholesome to have them in a sitting or sleeping room, but you can come here and feed them every morning. They eat a great deal; and when they grow bigger, they will require fresh mulberry leaves more than once in the day."

"I thought that silkworms were of a light grey colour, mamma," said Edward.

"So these will be when they are older. They change their skin several times; and when they leave off eating, it is a sign they will soon begin to spin. Then they will choose a corner of the tray, and spin the fine silk round their own bodies, just leaving space to move; and this ball of golden coloured silk is called a cocoon."

"Where do they find the silk? I do not understand it at all," said Marion, rather despairingly.

"They find it within their own little bodies," replied Augustus. "Mamma's dress is made of silk that these little caterpillars have produced. It is *really very* curious."

"*Our cloth* coats are made of sheep's wool, so they

are also productions of the animal kingdom; but the frocks the girls have on to-day are made of gingham, are they not, mamma?" inquired Edward.

"Yes; you are right; and ginghams being cotton, they are a vegetable production."

"How is that, mamma?" asked Marion.

"Because," replied her mother, "cotton is found in the pods of the cotton plant, that grows in warm climates. Linen is also from a plant called flax. The fibres of the stem are prepared in a particular manner, and then woven into linen. But there is the bell, calling me to breakfast, and you to your studies, so I will tell you more about the silkworm another day."

CHAPTER XVII.

BLACK MONDAY.

"It is not home without thee; the lone seat
Is still unclaim'd, where thou wert wont to be;
In every echo of returning feet,
In vain we list for what should herald thee:
Brother, come home."—F. HEMANS.

Time passed on quickly. It was arranged that all the children should have holidays from the first of July until the twelfth of August, the dreaded day on which Augustus and Edward were to commence *their college* career. No school in England enjoyed

a higher reputation than the one which Mr. Tresham had selected for his sons. The youths who left that establishment to fight their way in the world, had a perfect and practical knowledge of their religion; and they were remarkable for their true Catholic piety, high principles, and gentleman-like conduct, as well as for being thoroughly well informed, and prepared for professions.

July was spent amidst all the enjoyments of the sea-side, partly at Brighton and partly at Ramsgate. Every fine day the children added to their collection of shells and seaweeds, which, with Mrs. Carrington's help, they classed, and kept for a grand exhibition during the Christmas holidays.

One of the amusements on wet winter days at Middleford, had been to collect all the shells and seaweeds, which they had picked up during their annual visit to the sea-side, and place them in order on the card tables in the billiard room. They called this their exhibition; and their father and mother delighted them by going to see it. Now that they were a little older, they intended to make this exhibition take somewhat of the form of a museum. Charles Powis, who had left Hardale School, and had gone to visit his uncle and sister, previous to entering the navy, had given his cousins, before parting, a beautiful japanned cabinet, with shelves and drawers, in which to place their specimens, and he *promised* to bring them as many curiosities as he *could find* in the course of his voyages.

It was, therefore, with a double zest that they searched the sands and rocks, and then looked over their books on conchology, in order to find the name of each shell, with a description of its former little inhabitant.

But pleasures in this life are fleeting. The happy sea-side holidays passed away only too quickly, and the third of August found all the family once more at Middleford. The dreaded departure must be prepared for now, and could not be driven from their thoughts any longer; however hard the trial, it had to be faced.

They had all been so happy together, and it would never be quite the same thing again. As the boys grew older, their pursuits would necessarily differ more and more from those of their sisters, and even during the vacations they would not perhaps be much together. Each one felt this, and it weighed down the young hearts as they silently prepared their parting gifts.

It was the last day at home. Dinner was over, and after leaving the dining-room, Mr. Tresham strolled with his sons into the shrubbery. It was a calm bright evening, a gentle breeze relieving the oppressive heat of an August day. They walked on for some minutes in silence. The boys dreaded making a show of their feelings; "weeping and gnashing of teeth," as they said, they could not stand; so when they were half choking at the thought of its being the last walk with their father for many

months, Edward stooped to pick up a dandelion, and blew away the feathery seeds with a violent puff; while Augustus pulled at a laurel branch with all his might, as if the effort helped to drive back the tears that would force themselves.

Presently Mr. Tresham spoke: "My *dear* boys," said he,—he always laid a stress on the word *dear*, when speaking to his children—"My *dear* boys, you are now going to a large school, where you will meet with many youths of various characters, many of whom have been differently brought up from yourselves. I hope you will never follow the example of those who are not good and upright, or who break the college rules. Always keep them yourselves as well as you can. Be obedient, steady, and, above all, attentive to your religious duties. And," he continued, placing a hand on the shoulder of each of his sons, and looking down upon them in that affectionate manner which was so peculiarly his own, "if Almighty God should deign hereafter to give to either of you a wish to be a priest, never let the boys laugh you out of it. I would not influence you one way or the other, for such a great grace must come from God: but if you should ever have reason to think that you are called to that highest of all earthly dignities, the Priesthood, cherish and preserve the desire; and remember that you will have your parents' blessing and approbation."

By this time they came in sight of the house, and *the little* girls, who had been straining their eyes,

looking in every direction for papa and brothers, ran to meet them and call them in to tea.

The next morning, the carriage was at the door at eight o'clock, and in a few minutes Mr. and Mrs. Tresham, with Augustus and Edward, were on their way to Cosgrove College. The young sisters, with hearts as heavy as lead, watched them out of sight; and then Beatrice and Marion sought comfort in their dolls, while Margaret betook herself to her own little room, where, throwing herself down on the floor, and burying her head on a chair, she wept unrestrainedly, until her sisters came to call her to the schoolroom. The sight of her flushed cheeks and swollen eyes caused their tears to flow afresh, so Mrs. Carrington kindly decided that studies should not begin until the next day, and announced that on Wednesday their friends the Cartwrights were coming to spend the afternoon with them. Cheered by her sympathy, and grateful to their mother for having provided such a treat for them in her absence, the thoughts of the children took a more cheerful turn. "Christmas would soon come," Mrs. Carrington reminded them; "they must begin at once to prepare little presents for their brothers; they could renew the dresses in the play box, choose little dramas, write out the parts, and look for historical anecdotes that would do for charades."

Then, as it was too warm to walk, they went to visit the silkworms. Several of the little animals

had spun their silken cocoons, and others were lifting their heads high, as if in search of something.

"They are ready to spin," said Mrs. Carrington, in answer to the children's inquiries. "Get several half-sheets of letter paper, fold them in the form of a cornucopia, put a caterpillar into each, and then we must pin the papers to the piece of tape that your mother fastened on the wall between those two pictures. The caterpillars like snug corners while they are spinning."

"May I take down the papers in which the silkworms have already spun their cocoons?" asked Margaret.

"Yes, you may; and then I will show you how to wind off the silk. I suppose you know that you will not find the silkworm again as it was before?"

"Yes," replied Beatrice. "It is changed into a chrysalis; but I don't understand how it can be."

"Every insect of the caterpillar tribe has no less than four distinct states. First, the eggs; secondly, the grub or caterpillar; thirdly, the chrysalis; and fourthly, the moth or butterfly. When the caterpillar has finished spinning, it changes into a shapeless insect called a chrysalis, which appears almost without life, and it does not eat in that state."

"Here is a tumbler of tepid water," said Margaret. "I remember mamma told me we should want one when we wound off the silk."

"Very true," replied Mrs. Carrington, as she unfolded one of the papers, and gently removed the

silken ball. "Now, if we let the cocoon float on the top of the water, we shall very easily find a thread, and if we go to work quietly, we shall be able to wind it all off without once breaking the silk."

The children watched their governess as she wound the silk on to a card, until at last the cocoon became so thin and transparent, that the grub, in its new form, could be distinctly seen lying within it. The silk was then broken off, and taking what remained of the cocoon out of the tumbler, Mrs. Carrington cut it carefully, in order to get the chrysalis out without hurting it; and after it had been closely examined, she buried it about an inch deep in a box of bran without a lid.

"Won't it be smothered there?" inquired Marion.

"No, dear, it will take no harm; it wants nothing to eat now. When we have wound the silk off the other cocoons that are ready, we will bury each chrysalis in the same box, and in about a fortnight they will change into moths of a dull, light brown colour; and some morning we shall find them at the top of the bran."

"How very curious!" said Beatrice. "And will they change again after that?"

"No; that is their last and perfect state. We shall put the moths on a paper tray, and they will lay their eggs and die. Then we must throw away the dead moths, and keep the tray with the eggs in some dry place all the winter; and next April or May it should be placed on a table in front of this

now went in toys for Ally. He had grown so beautiful, that strangers would perpetually stop the nurse, when out of doors, to admire him.

"What is your name, my little man?" once asked some ladies in the square.

"Ally," was the curt reply.

"But your other name? Whose little boy are you?"

"Papa's and mamma's," said the child, running off clapping his hands, and leaving the ladies highly amused.

Ally was indeed a most engaging, loveable child; he had such endearing qualities, and was so intelligent. As Beatrice and Marion were inseparables, Margaret looked upon her little brother as her special property,—played with him, taught him his letters, and short pieces of poetry to recite to his parents. In fine, she never seemed happy when not occupied with him or for him.

One fine evening early in April, Mr. Tresham was watching Margaret as she cut up an orange for Ally at dessert.

"I wonder," said he, half aloud, "what Maggie would do without Ally?"

"Oh, papa, I should die!" she exclaimed, vehemently.

Mrs. Tresham shuddered. What were her thoughts at that moment no one knew, but certain it was, that *never again* did they all meet together. It was the *last time* that the idolized little brother was at

dessert; the last time, for nearly three long dreary months, that Margaret or Beatrice spoke to their mother.

Marion had been ailing all day, and complaining of sore throat and head ache. The doctor had been sent for, and he said it was a mild form of scarletina. "He did not think it would be serious," and so on; but Mrs. Tresham thought it would be well to take precautions, so it was arranged for Maggie and Trissey to sleep in a spare room on the drawing room floor; Ally's cot was brought down also, and Teresa was to sleep in the adjoining dressing room. The next day Marion was not so well, and Mrs. Tresham did not leave her.

"Where is Ally, and what has he been crying for?" inquired Mr. Tresham, when Beatrice and Margaret went into the dining room as usual after dinner.

"He seemed tired, papa, and has been crying for water, so Teresa thought it would be better for him not to come down," replied Margaret.

"Crying for water! that's a bad sign," said her father.

Little was spoken, still less was tasted. Occasionally Mr. Tresham said, as if to himself, "Crying for water! Oh, that's a bad, bad sign." He looked uneasy, and soon rose from table, and went up to Ally's room; then he took his hat and went out. Presently Mrs. Carrington proposed to Margaret and *Beatrice a* little walk, as it was so fine, but an un-

defined fear of they knew not what, took possession of the children, and they begged to remain indoors. A sort of foreboding came over them that soon perhaps Ally, as well as Marion, would be separated from them, and they determined to stay with him as long as they might.

Accordingly they went together to his room, and found Teresa preparing to undress him. He smiled when he saw his sisters, and did not appear ill; indeed he was wide awake and inclined to play. To please Margaret the maid pushed his little bed close up to hers. "I can watch him, then," she thought, as the little fellow knelt on her lap, and said his night prayers. Many times during the night Teresa stole into the room, for she felt uneasy. Often, too, Margaret started out of her sleep, and gazed upon the child, but he was sleeping quietly, and as she watched, and looked on that angelic little face, she thought again and again, "I could not live without him."

Towards morning he became restless, and Teresa got up to give him a cooling drink; his lips were parched, his face was flushed, and he appeared so feverish, that the maid called the two girls an hour earlier than usual, hurried the toilettes, and told them to say their prayers in the school room.

"I must kiss Ally first," said Margaret, passionately.

"*No, Miss* Tresham," said the maid, respectfully *but firmly.* "I must obey my mistress's orders;

she wishes you both to go downstairs at once, and stay there until breakfast is ready. Surely, miss, your papa and mamma have trouble enough just now, without adding to their worry."

These words had the desired effect, and, only turning round at the door to give another look, and kiss her hand to the sick child, she went downstairs.

"Oh, Maggie, what is going to happen? We did not see mamma all day yesterday, nor Marion, nor Smeakle, and now it is Ally," cried Beatrice, as the tears fell into her bread and milk. "We must pray hard, Maggie," continued the child, looking up at her elder sister, and longing for a word of comfort.

But Margaret had none to give. She had yet to learn resignation to God's holy will, and rebellious thoughts were passing through her mind. "No, no," she said to herself, "it must not be. I cannot stay away from Ally. If I get the scarletina, what matters it, so that I can be with him?"

Oh, how much more generous, how much more really affectionate was her little sister, who submitted at once to whatever her dear mother thought best. At a quarter past eight Mrs. Carrington took them to Mass. As she knelt by the two sisters, she little knew how different were their thoughts. Beatrice, with eyes closed, and hands clasped, was praying, with all the earnestness of her heart, for her parents, and for Marion and Ally. Nor did she forget the brothers who were away, nor the sister by *her side*. "*Help* her, O my God," she cried, "help

her to bear this trouble. Make us all good. Comfort papa and mamma, and cure Marion and Ally, if it is Thy holy will." At the Elevation, when our dear Lord came down upon the altar, she bowed her head, and fervently prayed, "Oh, my God, I love Thee, I adore Thee. Thy holy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." And the child left the church, feeling calm and brave, to bear whatever that Divine Will might be.

But what of Margaret? Did she pray? Alas, no. Restless and troubled, she turned over the leaves of her prayer book, while something like remorse came upon her, as she thought of her words two short days before. "*I should die without Ally.*" Was she going to be punished for them? Was she going to live a long life without her darling little brother? Why should she think so? He was in no danger. It could not be. Death had come to other families, but it could not come to them; it was impossible: they had always been so happy, there could not be a change." Such were Margaret's thoughts, and yet her own words still haunted her. That sad look of her mother's, too; it was before her now, and made her heart sink, and her whole frame tremble.

"But if you are anxious, Margaret, why do you not pray?" Her Angel Guardian whispered this, and she remembered, besides, how her mother had *taught them* to go to God in all their troubles. She

had often done so before, and found peace and consolation. Why, then, did she not pray now?

The reason was this. Her love for the little child was immoderate. There are certain bounds that Almighty God has marked out, and beyond these we must not step in our love for creatures. "Love God above all things, and our neighbour as ourselves," is the commandment. But how could Margaret be said to love God above all things, when, if it had been possible, she would have resisted His Divine will? When she would not be generous, and say, "Thy will be done," for fear of what that Will might be.

The two children walked home silently and sorrowfully. When they reached the house their young hearts beat quickly, for they saw the doctor's carriage at the door. He had made his visit, and was coming down the steps. Margaret was generally silent in the presence of strangers, but shyness was forgotten in her anxiety for her sister and brother.

"How are they? are they better?" she exclaimed.

The good-natured doctor looked kindly at her, but as he did not speak at once Beatrice repeated the question.

"Well," said he, at last, "I hope I may say they are going on favourably; but," he added, "you must both remain downstairs, there must be no going up at all."

"May we not go to my little room; the door is on the first landing?"

"Very well; but mind, not a step farther." Saying this, he got into the carriage, and drove away.

Mrs. Carrington saw that it would be impossible for the children to give their minds to study, but knowing that occupation would be the best thing for them, she advised Margaret to write a long letter to her brothers, and gave Beatrice a frock to make for Marion's doll; then she left them and went upstairs. Her services at this time were invaluable. Gliding noiselessly from one invalid to the other, assisting poor Mrs. Tresham by every means in her power, sending kind messages to the children downstairs, she was truly an angel of consolation to every one.

Mrs. Tresham divided her time between her little boy and girl. This perfect mother was ever calm and collected, and in the midst of her anxiety she thought of all and for all, but of herself never.

After dinner, as Ally was worse, another physician arrived with their own doctor, and Mr. Tresham went downstairs to meet them. In the evening there was a consultation of three physicians, and they gave it as their opinion that "Marion would struggle through the disease; she was a strong child, and had a good constitution." But Ally? "He was a healthy boy, though of a delicate frame; the fever, too, seemed to have taken such a strong hold *of him. If he* could stand the necessary remedies—*but he was so* young." This was all they would say.

Maggie's and Trissey's beds were put up in the back dining room, but little sleep could be expected for any one that night, which was passed by the entire household in the greatest anxiety, for every one loved the sweet little boy, and felt acutely for his afflicted parents.

The next morning he was still worse, and the doctors declared him to be in imminent danger.

"Oh, Maggie," said Beatrice, after breakfast, as she threw her arms round her sister's neck, "I am sure Ally is very bad; I never saw papa look so sorrowful. I met him just now in the hall, and he told me he had sent for another new doctor to try and cure him, and that you and I were to be very good and quiet."

Maggie was sitting on the floor in her little room, with the door half open, watching every one that went in or out of her brother's room. She made a sign to Beatrice to sit down beside her, and they listened with suspended breath. Now and then they heard a gentle moan, and once or twice the sound of Ally's tiny weak voice reached their ears.

"Maggie, let us remember what mamma often tells us," whispered Trissey.

"What do you mean?" asked her sister, in a tone of great irritation.

"Mamma says that when things happen that we don't like, we ought to offer it all up for our sins, and for the conversion of our Protestant relations."

Margaret made no reply; she was too absorbed in

her own grief to be generous, but her younger sister gave a silent earnest thought to God, and her unuttered prayer was heard.

A few minutes afterwards the under-housemaid passed by. "Oh, Miss Tresham," she incautiously said, "Kitty told me that Master Ally has been asking for you all the morning, and that once he said, 'Tell Mar I should get better if she would come to see me.'"

Margaret started up, and was going to run out of the room, but the terrified maid held her back.

"Oh, miss, pray don't go upstairs. I ought not to have told you. Oh dear, how sorry I am."

"I must, I must; I can't stay away any longer," cried the impetuous child. "What does it signify, so that I can see him?"

"Oh Maggie, don't; Maggie, do stop; it does matter, indeed it does," said Beatrice, crying violently. "You'll get the fever, and it will kill papa and mamma."

"It will kill papa and mamma." These words were happily a check upon Margaret, and she was returning to her place, when the maid, in leaving the room, said, "If you can send Master Ally a toy, miss, it will please him, for Kitty also told me that he said just now, 'Ask Mar to buy me a new toy.'" Saying this she went away.

Almost before Beatrice knew what her sister was about, Margaret had hastily put on her pelisse and *hat, and* rushed out of the house. She had never in

all her life been out alone, and not even with an attendant were any of the children allowed to walk in Oxford Street, as the crowd is so great; but all was forgotten, save the one thought, "Ally wants me to buy him a new toy."

The passers by stared as she strode along, and some pushed her rudely; but she heeded not, nor stopped until she stood opposite the Queen's Bazaar. But, alas! a disappointment awaited her there, for the doors were locked. It wanted still a quarter to ten, and the child paced up and down in an agony of impatience. At last the doors were thrown open, and Margaret ran up to a toy stall. She had plenty of money, for she had been saving it for a long time past to buy a pretty little sofa for her brother, to match a velvet chair that Lady Springfield had given to him. Her choice was a large Noah's Ark, a book of nursery rhymes with coloured pictures, and an amusing toy, where some monkeys were saying their lessons, and a baboon was holding a birch rod in his paw. The stall-holder's offer to send the parcel was declined; but Margaret bought a basket, put the toys into it, and hurried away.

She had not gone many steps from the bazaar, when she heard herself called by name, and, turning round, saw Mr. Herbert Morson, who was a cousin of her mother's, standing before her. If there had been one person in the world more than another that Margaret would not have wished to meet at that moment, it was this very Mr. Morson. A better

man could scarcely be met with, but he had such peculiarly rigid notions, especially regarding children, that the Treshams and their young friends used often to say, it was a good thing he had none of his own; but perhaps if he had it would have been different.

Three distinct ideas were fixed in his head; the first was, that all children were spoiled; the second, that of all spoiled children, the Treshams were the most so; and the third, that of all spoiled Treshams, Margaret was the worst. He was accustomed to begin his not unfrequent lectures by saying: "I take a cousin's privilege to remark such and such a thing;" so it was understood in the nursery and schoolroom, that cousins' privileges were by no means the most pleasant things in the world.

"What, Margaret, here so early, and all alone! what does it mean?" said he, looking naturally enough very much astonished. "How are the little ones?"

"Very ill indeed; and I want to get home as soon as I can."

"But why are you all alone?" continued he, following Margaret, who was taking giant's strides in the hope of getting away. "Does any one know you are from home?"

"No, no one,—yes, Beatrice does, I think—I am not sure," replied the child, in a bewildered tone.

"Stop. I cannot think of allowing you to go

back by yourself," said Mr. Morson, taking her hand; "wait while I call a cab."

In vain Margaret tried to escape; she was obliged to submit, and take a seat in the cab by his side.

"Margaret," said he, when they had started, "I take a cousin's privilege"—she shuddered—"to tell you that it is very wrong to come here all alone. Of course, your father does not know of it."

"No," was the laconic reply.

"Have you seen your mother this morning?"

"No; we never see her now."

"How is Ally to-day?"

"Very ill indeed."

"Have you heard what is the doctor's opinion this morning?"

There was no answer to this question, for the words Maggie tried to say all but choked her.

Mr. Morson thought her sullen. "I know they had but little hope yesterday," he said; "and what on earth could be your motive for going to a bazaar at such a time?"

No answer.

"What have you been buying?" said he, pointing to the basket.

"Toys."

"Toys! Good heavens!—and is this your parents' reward for all their indulgence? Ungrateful, unfeeling child! To profit of the confusion and sorrow there is now in the house, to commit an act of daring disobedience; and not only that, but to be so

indifferent about your little brother and sister as to think of toys."

Margaret could not speak, her heart was too crushed; but Mr. Morson, thinking she was hardened, went on. "You know what grief your parents are in; their little Aloysius and Marion will perhaps die of this dreadful fever, which, had they remained in the country, they probably would not have had. And for whose sake did they come to London but yours? The doctors thought it necessary for *you;* you see the consequences, and yet you can think of foolish toys."

Margaret fell a heavy lump at his feet. Poor child!—she is indeed to be pitied now. Never, in all her grief, had it once occurred to her, that she had been in any way the cause of the dark dark cloud that had come over the once happy family; but now it darted through her brain.

"Yes, it is all my fault, all my fault, all my doing. I am the cause of Ally's and Marion's illness. I am the cause of papa's and mamma's grief. Perhaps they will die. My brothers and sisters will never be happy again, and it will be all my fault." These thoughts passed through Margaret's mind in far less time than it takes to tell them, then a dizziness and faintness came over her, and she knew no more of what was passing until she opened her eyes in the dining room at home, and found Mr. Morson, *who was* quite alarmed at the effect his words had

produced, standing by, and watching her with real tenderness.

"Oh, there are the toys," were her first words; "send them at once to Ally, please, Teresa," said she to the maid, who was bathing her temples with cold water, "and let him know that Mar sends them, with her fondest love, and a thousand kisses."

"Strange child!" thought Mr. Morson, who, seeing that she had recovered, took his leave. He had not meant to be severe, he had only given what he considered a merited reproof, yet he would gladly have recalled his words. They were soon uttered, but the impression made was lasting. Time and religion softened their bitterness, and taught Margaret that at most she had only been an instrument in the hands of God for the fulfilment of His will, nevertheless the morbid feeling never entirely wore away.

Little Ally smiled when the toys were shown to him. They were placed beside him, and he said, "Tell Mar I love her so." But he was far too ill to take any further notice of them, and very soon a great change took place.

"Mamma, don't cry, I am better now," said the little fellow beseechingly, when he saw his mother weeping by his bed.

"Ally is going to be happy with God; he will pray for papa and mamma when he is in heaven, will he not?" said the broken-hearted father, as *he gazed on his* dying child.

"Oh yes, I'll pray now." Then he said the "Our Father," the "Hail Mary," and "God bless papa and mamma, brothers and sisters, everybody; God bless me, and make me, and make me"— But before he could finish the sentence Almighty God had taken him to Himself, and made him a bright little angel in heaven.

The sorrowing parents remained kneeling for a long time by the fair little corpse, and resigned their youngest born into the hands of his Creator.

CHAPTER XIX.

PAPA'S LITTLE PRISONERS.

"Take Thou my wayward heart, O Lord,
And mould it to Thy will;
One look from Thee, Thy only word,
Its wild unrest can still.

Thy Sacred Heart was wounded, Lord,
Why then should mine be free?
Thy Mother's pierced with spear and sword,
In her deep love for Thee."

M.

Happily Margaret had not been missed; and Beatrice, guessing rightly that she had gone to buy Ally some toys, had no fears for her safety; she *therefore* kept silence upon the subject, and no one *was alarmed*.

The two children, after Mr. Morson's departure, remained in the dining room, for even the little room on the stairs was forbidden ground now. They sat close together, rolled up in one arm-chair, listening for every step or sound. Beatrice threw a shawl over the canary's cage, to keep him quiet, for his perpetual song was more than they could bear.

At last the clock struck twelve, and soon afterwards the door was hastily opened, and Mr. Tresham entered. It was a dark, foggy London day, and wrapped up, as he was, in the still darker gloom of his own sad thoughts, he did not perceive the children, and they watched him as he paced up and down the room a countless number of times. In all their lives they had never seen him look like that. Every now and then he stopped, clasped his hands, made the sign of the cross over and over again, and said, "Oh God, Thy will be done."

The tears fell fast down Beatrice's cheeks, but Margaret could not cry; she sat there, rigid and motionless, still saying to herself, as if in defiance of her fears, "It cannot, cannot be."

Presently her father stopped again, and said aloud, "Oh, my God, my God, Thy holy will be done. This is a *loss*, a *loss*, but Thy will be done."

Now indeed the children began to realize that their darling brother was dead. They could bear the scene no longer. The little gentle Beatrice buried her head in the chair, and cried as if her *heart would break*; while Margaret sprang to her

feet, and wildly throwing her arms round her father, exclaimed, "Papa, papa, what does it mean? Papa, papa!"

Mr. Tresham started. "My dear *dear* children," said he, "our little Ally is now an angel in heaven. Almighty God has taken him to be with Him for ever. It is His will, Trissey dear. Ah, Maggie, my poor child, we must all be resigned, indeed we must."

Then, as if he suddenly recollected something, he left the room as hurriedly as he had entered it, took his hat, and went out in search of lodgings, to which he could take Margaret and Beatrice at once.

Poor Mrs. Tresham! How she longed to give her children a parting kiss, God only knows. She dared not go near them, however, but in the midst of her grief and blinding tears, she sat down and wrote them such a beautiful letter, so sweet in its resignation, so heroic in its unselfish love, that we give it here in full.

"My dearest children,

"It has pleased Almighty God to take our angelic little Ally to Himself. His holy will is always right and just. He knows best what is good for us all, and we have only to adore and be resigned. Your dear little brother is far happier in heaven than we could ever make him here; this *thought will* be our consolation. It is a great trial *to us to send* you away, but it is quite necessary.

Keep up your spirits as well as you can, especially before your dear father, who is so anxious about you both, and who thinks much more of my sorrow and of yours, than of his own, which is nevertheless very great indeed, and we must do all we can to cheer him.

"Mrs. Carrington is so good and kind. I do not know what I should do without her; she is going to write to her mother, to ask her if she can stay with you until we can be together again. Pray much for our little suffering Marion, that, if it is God's will, she may be spared to us. Write to us often, and to your poor dear brothers, who will be so grieved to hear of their loss.

"May God bless you both, my sweet children, is the prayer of your most affectionate mother,

"MARY MARGARET TRESHAM."

This letter, as a precaution against infection, was steeped in vinegar, and given to Teresa, the second nurse, who, having had to wait on the little girls, had not been with the sick children.

On her way to the dining room she heard a knock at the door, and thinking it was her master, opened it herself, but to her surprise found it to be Father Mildmay. Mr. and Mrs. Dudley had heard the day before that Marion was ill of scarlatina, and they were so uneasy that the good priest volunteered to take the stage to London, and see how matters stood.

Hearing from the maid all that had happened, he

sent her upstairs to tell Mrs. Tresham of his arrival, and, taking the letter, went to the children. He found them just as their father had left them; Beatrice sobbing in the arm chair, Margaret leaning against the table, her eyes fixed, her lips quivering, her face as pale as death.

"My poor children," said he, kindly, as he gently led her to a chair, "My poor children, this is indeed a trial, and I am glad I am here to share it with you. See here," continued he, as Beatrice approached him, "I have a letter for you both, which the nursery maid was going to bring in; but I have sent her with a message, so I will read it to you myself, shall I?" he inquired, turning to Margaret, for he saw it would be well to make her speak.

With a desperate effort she whispered "Yes," and before Father Mildmay had finished reading, abundant tears came to her relief. After a short time he knelt down and said aloud a most beautiful prayer for resignation, the children, kneeling likewise, followed him word by word, and when their father came in and told them he had engaged comfortable apartments in the next street, and that the carriage to take them there would be at the door at three o'clock, they told him they would be ready, and, to please him, even tried to take some dinner, though it did seem so very dreadful to eat then, and every morsel seemed to choke them.

It was a sad exit, and we will not dwell upon it. *Teresa* was appointed to go with Margaret and Bea-

trice, and in a day or two Mrs. Wilmot joined them. This truly kind old friend, by her amiability and affectionate sympathy, did much towards lightening the gloom that oppressed the poor children. Father Mildmay remained a few days with Mr. and Mrs. Tresham, consoling and cheering them, and then returned to Clearburn, much edified by the example of Christian fortitude and resignation he had witnessed.

Three times regularly every day during the next weeks Mr. Tresham went to the lodgings in George Street; he seemed as if he could not do enough for his "little prisoners," as he called the children. At one time it was to bring the doctor's orders about keeping warm, and not going out unless the weather was very fine. At another time it was to say how Marion was going on. Then, day after day he brought new games and story books, and sent the carriage for them to drive in the park. If it was very fine and warm, Margaret and Beatrice went on the balcony to show themselves to their father, otherwise he only saw them at the window, for, fearing infection, he never went upstairs, but gave all his directions to Mrs. Wilmot in the dining room. Uncle Fred often came, loaded with books and curious puzzles for his nieces; and Lady Springfield took them out in her carriage. One day Maggie heard her give orders to drive to the Queen's Bazaar. "Oh, not there, not there," she exclaimed, and such a deadly palor came over her countenance that the

good old lady, without asking any questions, drove to the Zoological Gardens instead.

During all this time poor little Marion lay dangerously ill, her life hanging upon a thread, and in a great measure she owed her recovery, under God, to the devoted, self-sacrificing and experienced care of Mrs. Smeakle.

At last the doctors pronounced her out of danger. Oh, what a bright gleam of sunshine that was. No sooner had they left the house than Mr. Tresham set off to the children's lodgings. It was a fine sunny day, and great was their delight to see their father once more with a smile of joy on his face, and it caused no little increase of pleasure when Mrs. Carrington arrived a moment later, brimful of the good news, and they chatted for several minutes from the balcony.

In the afternoon their father called to take them for a drive, and stopped for a minute at the door in Montague Square, that their mother might see them from the window of Marion's room. Altogether that day was a less sad one than any they had spent since Ally's death.

April was now drawing to a close; the weather was fine and warm, and the doctors approved of Mr. Tresham's plan to send his "little prisoners" to the sea-side. He had at first thought of Ramsgate, but just at that time Mrs. Tresham received a most kind *letter from* Lady Myers, who was an intimate friend

of the family, pressing her to send them to Southampton.

"We have," said Lady Myers, "taken a delightful villa, situated not far from the town, and very near to the fine old ruins of Netley Abbey. There are two or three other detached houses quite close to us, and one pretty little furnished cottage is to let, with a nice garden joining ours. We should be so pleased to have the dear children for neighbours."

This proposal was all that Mr. and Mrs. Tresham could have desired. It relieved them of many anxieties, and the house was engaged from the fifth of May.

Lady Myers was a widow. In disposition she much resembled Mrs. Tresham, who in youth had been her companion at a convent school, and the friendship contracted then, existed through life. Her manners were dignified and very pleasing, and she had such a motherly way that all children loved her. Her husband had died about a year before, leaving her with three children; one boy, the young Sir Ernest, who was at Cosgrove College, and two girls, Pauline, who was nearly fourteen years of age, and Angela, a lovely little child of eight.

Mrs. Tresham particularly rejoiced at the plan now arranged, for Pauline was just the sort of girl she would have chosen as a companion for her own Maggie; she had such good common sense, and was in fact remarkably gifted. At such a time, too, her example, she hoped, would have great weight, for

though crushed and heart-broken by the loss of her father, she yet, with a strength of mind beyond her years, so controlled her grief that she had been a great help to her mother.

But to return to the two children.

"We have just got this little corner to ground, and then the slippers will be finished," said Maggie, one morning, the last they were to spend in London.

"That's right; and Trissey has nearly finished the cushion, too, I see," said Mrs. Wilmot. "Then they must be packed up, and sent to Montague Square. You had better both write a letter to your father and mother, telling them what a pleasure it has been to you to work them. And, by the by, I have some good news."

"Oh, shall we see mamma and Marion before we start?" exclaimed Trissey, the colour mounting to her cheeks at the thought.

"Oh, may we?" repeated Maggie, before Mrs. Wilmot had time to reply.

"No, dears, no; don't buoy yourselves up with that hope. Your mother is in much better spirits, for Marion is decidedly improving every day; still the doctors think it would not be prudent for you to see her except from the window, as you have already done; but my news is that your papa will go with us all the way to Southampton."

Margaret's slipper went up to the ceiling. It was *the only* way she could find at the moment of *showing her* joy. In its descent it lodged on the

chandelier. In an instant Beatrice was on the table, and Maggie followed her. They managed to get it down with the handle of a parasol, Mrs. Wilmot standing by in terror lest lamp, children, slipper, table, and all, should come down with a crash. It was the first time, however, that either of them had shown any inclination to play, so, though it was rather a rough beginning, the good old lady encouraged it with all her heart, and as soon as they were safely landed, took the parasol from Beatrice, and actually chased them round and round the room, pretending that she was the

"Old woman who lived in a shoe,
And had so many children she didn't know what to do."

Up came the landlady, dressed in pea-green silk, and a black lace cap covered all over with flaming red ribbons, ready to receive some visitors in the back parlour. She was startled at the unusual noise, and wanted to know what could be the matter.

"Oh, Mrs. Poppitree," exclaimed Beatrice, when she had breath to speak, "we are going away to-morrow, isn't it nice? And what is more delightful still, papa is going to take us."

A shade came over Mrs. Poppitree's broad red countenance, but whether it was caused by sorrow for the departure of her lodgers, or whether she was shocked that the young ladies could be so very impolite as to tell her to her face they were glad to go, *history does not* record.

CHAPTER XX.

LEAVING LONDON.

"Father, father! Oh, what memories, fond and true,
Does not that name awake! Awake?—how false the term!
For never hath thy memory slept, e'en for an hour.
And sure it is a holy thought, that love of thine,
Which, though resigned, yet bore thee to an early tomb.
Through all these long long years, that love so pure and strong,
Hath hovered round, like some bright spirit from above,
Heaven-sent to cheer and guide us on our homeward path.
It is thine own—thine own! My father, 'tis thy spirit,
All sanctified and hallowed by the sight of God."—ANON.

Though Mrs. Tresham gave a willing consent that the two children should leave London, still it cost her motherly heart many a pang. She had not, it is true, been able to go to see them once since they quitted her; but she felt that she was near them, and their father had constantly brought her news of them.

Now she would have to wait for letters; and though she had every confidence in Mrs. Wilmot, yet it seemed to her like a fresh separation. Heroically unselfish, however, she succeeded so well in *hiding her* feelings, that the next morning, when *Mr. Tresham* and her children drove up to the door,

she went out on to the balcony, waved her handkerchief, kissed her hand, and looked so cheerful, that neither Margaret nor Beatrice had any idea how much she was suffering on their account. Dear Mrs. Carrington, after staying a minute on the balcony, went to the nursery, and sent down good and faithful Mrs. Smeakle, that she also might have a last look at "her children;" but before leaving the room she took little Marion in her arms to the nursery window, that her sisters might see her for a moment; and when at last they drove away, it was with hearts less heavy than they could have expected.

All night they had been looking forward to this interview; they could not sleep for the thought of it, and the joy of having their father with them all day long. But here was an unlooked-for disappointment, which, when viewed from a distance, may appear light, but which was really a very great one to the two children. As Mr. Tresham was still afraid of infection, and thought precautions against it necessary, he sat alone on the box of the carriage, and dined alone at the hotel. However, as the carriage was open, he could talk to his little girls; and when they got fairly out of town, the country looked so beautiful, the air was so balmy and pleasant, that they could not but enjoy it; and seeing that it pleased their father to hear them talk and laugh, they kept up a lively conversation the whole way.

At Winchester, the ancient capital of England, they

stopped for the night, and visited the cathedral, in which they saw the magnificent monument of William Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester. The next day they reached Southampton about eleven o'clock, and after taking lunch, drove at once to South Cottage. "Oh, what a pretty little place," was the exclamation of both the children, as the carriage stopped at the garden gate.

"I am so glad you like its appearance, dears; I hope you will be happy here," said Mr. Tresham; "you can have little gardens, and I will send you down some tools and seeds, so that when I bring your mother and Marion to see you, you will have plenty of flowers to show us."

It did not take them many minutes to run into every room in the house, and then they went back to their father, and told him that everything was delightful.

"Papa," said Margaret, "there is a lovely little room looking on the old Abbey for Mrs. Wilmot; and a double-bedded room for Trissey and me to the front, with a sea-view, besides comfortable rooms for the servants, and a nice spare one for you, papa. Oh, do come as often as you can."

But Mr. Tresham shook his head. "I cannot leave your dear mother again; indeed, I must return to her now as quickly as I can, so good-bye, and God bless you both, my own dear children!"

"Won't you come in at all; not even into the *pretty little* sitting-room, papa?"

"No, dears, I had better not; and I shall be anxious till I get home."

"Then please to take these nosegays with you, papa," said Beatrice. "Some one has been before us here, and has put such lovely flowers in all the rooms; I dare say it is Pauline Myers, she is always doing things of that sort. Oh, here they all are!"

Lady Myers and her two daughters just then entered the garden gate. Since they had last met, death had visited each family. Both now were in deep mourning; and when Margaret embraced her friends, she saw tears in the eyes of Pauline, and observed with sorrow that the wavy hair of Lady Myers had become quite grey. "Oh," she thought to herself, "greatly as I shall ever mourn the loss of my darling little brother, still I have a dear father, and poor Pauline has not; so I have indeed reason to be thankful."

After a cordial welcome on the part of Lady Myers, and expressions of satisfaction on the part of Mr. Tresham, that he was leaving his children in such pleasant society, he took his departure, his last injunctions to Mrs. Wilmot being: "Let them have plenty of air and exercise; health, and the recovery of spirits, are the chief things to be looked to during the next six weeks; they will study all the better for it afterwards."

Maggie and Beatrice watched their father out of sight, and then, with hearts not quite so light as they

had been during the last two days, returned to the little cottage.

Lady Myers invited them to have tea with her, so after a short time the whole party walked together to Carlston Villa. It wanted yet an hour to tea time; so, leaving the two ladies in conversation in the drawing-room, Angela carried off Beatrice to feed some pet pigeons; and Pauline took Margaret to a pretty little arbour in the garden, covered with jasmine and clematis, and from which there was a fine view of the sea.

"I often sit here to learn my lessons," said Pauline, "when it is fine. And when mamma is too busy writing letters to attend to me, I come to this arbour with my needle-work, and think of papa. It is not much more than a year since he died, but it seems at least ten years. I am so glad you are come, Maggie, and I long to talk to you about him; he was such a kind good father, he seemed to have no other thought but for mamma's happiness and ours."

"He felt your little sister Alethea's death very much, did he not?"

"Oh, yes. I do not think he ever quite got over it. His health was failing at the time; and he always found this climate so cold and damp after India."

"How beautiful Alethea was!" said Margaret. "*Angela* is growing a little like her, I think."

"*I* never saw any one half so lovely as Alethea,"

replied Pauline; "her beauty, and all her ways, as my father said, were more of heaven than of earth. But tell me of your little Aloysius; I want to hear all about his illness?"

"I cannot," said Margaret; "don't ask me, Pauline dear. I think of him all day, and dream of him at night, but I cannot speak of him yet."

"I wonder at that: mamma and I talk continually of papa and my sister; it seems a comfort to do so."

"Oh yes, I dare say; but then it is different for me."

"Why so? I think you could not have loved your little Ally better than I loved my little Ally."

"Perhaps not; but still it is all so different. Don't ask me to explain it, Pauline," said Margaret, and she rose quickly to return to the house, for the recollection of Mr. Morson's words during that dreadful drive from the bazaar made her tremble like a culprit.

"I will not ask you again, dear Madge, I promise you, if you do not like it; but I hope you will speak to your mother of your feelings when you see her, for it must be so sad for you to think all day of your brother, and never to let any one know what your thoughts are."

The next morning was so fine that Mrs. Wilmot and the children were able to walk to Southampton for Mass, and on their way home she told them her plans. They were to study for two hours every morning, from ten till twelve, and after that they

might, she said, "run wild," with the exception of a music lesson twice a week, or half an hour's practice on the other days, with a little needlework in the evenings.

Accordingly, there were boating and yachting excursions to the Isle of Wight, and drives to the New Forest, which Pauline laughingly called a pilgrimage to the Red King's monument. But what they liked better than anything, was to wander through the ruins of the old abbey. Pauline had a remarkable taste for drawing, and was beginning to sketch nicely from nature; so, with Maggie for her companion, she would sit for hours on a grass mound under the shade of one of the ivy-grown walls, drawing the fine old gothic windows of the building.

One day the two girls were seated on a rock facing the sea; Pauline was sketching the little fishing boats, as they glided along on the smooth water; and Margaret was listlessly watching the sea gulls flying gracefully about, now dipping their wings in the blue waters, now soaring aloft amid the sails and masts of large vessels.

"Maggie," said Pauline, at length, "do you know you are very much changed? I was just thinking, that if you were like your former self, we should never be allowed to wander here by ourselves, even though we are scarcely more than a stone's-throw from home. Why, you would have been leaping *from* rock to rock like a goat, and getting into a *hundred* dangerous places, after seaweed, birds' eggs,

or something or other. Do brighten up, there's a dear old Madge."

"Oh, I don't care for that sort of thing now. I can never feel like that again," said Margaret, burning tears starting into her eyes.

"Oh yes, you can, and you will too," replied Pauline; and as Margaret shook her head, she added, "I'll tell you what, you will feel quite different, quite light-hearted I mean, when you have made your First Communion. I made mine, as you know, at the convent, and if it had not been for that, I do not know what I should have done when I was sent for home to the death-bed of my father. You know how I loved him; but when it feels so hard to live without him, I think of the happiness which is now so often mine, and I assure you it gives me strength to bear up against any sadness."

"Oh, but you are pious, and I am not."

"Pious! I really wish I were so. But it is impossible to forget how dear Mother Xaveria used to talk to us of our Divine Lord's love in the Blessed Sacrament. She looked like an angel when she was speaking of it. I remember so well the day after our First Communion, when we, that is, Mary Harcourt, Emma Gascoigne, and I, were with her in her little room at the school. Amongst other things she said that, if we had a lively faith and love, one thought of Jesus, dwelling for our sakes in the tabernacle, would always make us as bright and happy as

on our first Communion day, and as ready for self-sacrifice as we were then."

"Well, when all the congregation at Clearburn are joining in the hymn 'Jesus, the only thought of Thee,' or in the 'O Salutaris Hostia,' I think I do feel rather pious for the time being; but when the music stops it is all gone, just as if it had never been."

"That reminds me," said Pauline, laughing, "of something else that Mother Xaveria used to say to us sometimes. She warned us against what she called *little fits* of devotion. Not that she objected to them exactly, but these were her words, as far as I can remember. 'Be on your guard; and do not be vain of feelings of devotion you may at times experience; and in those moments you fancy, perhaps, you would like to be crucified with your heads downwards like St. Peter, or to be flayed alive like St. Bartholomew, and then, at the first little annoyance you meet with, you think you are insulted or ill-treated; away go all your fine thoughts and resolutions; you lose your temper, and cannot bear a word patiently. No, my dears,' she would say, 'have an unbounded confidence in God, but mistrust yourselves, and whenever you are tempted to resist His holy will, or to repine at it, think that the God who created you, who died for you, and who wishes nothing but your sanctification, is the very God who *dwells on* our altars, who comes into our hearts at *Holy Communion*, and who asks us if we cannot make

a little sacrifice for His dear sake, knowing, as we do, that whatever takes place is by His permission.'"

"Yes," answered Maggie, thoughtfully, "but I did not see it in that light. I only thought that if one or two things had not happened, Ally would be alive now."

"I think you are mistaken there, Madge; for just think, if Almighty God wanted to have Ally with Him in heaven, could He not have made anything happen that He wished? I can't explain well what I mean."

"I think I understand, Pauline, for mamma often talks to us in that way; but you see we have been so happy until lately, that the will of God has always been just what I wanted myself. When are you going back to the convent?"

"In August. I shall have been more than a year away, but it could not be helped, I could not leave my dear mother in her sorrow: but after Ernest's holidays she is going to get a governess for Angela, and then she will not be so lonely. How I wish you were going with me, Maggie?"

"Well, I think I shall perhaps do so, for mamma wishes me to make my first Communion at your convent; indeed, I should have been sent last year, only papa said I was not strong enough for school," added Margaret, with a sigh.

"Oh, how glad I am. I shall be so pleased to have you in my own dear convent; and you will love Mother Xaveria, I am sure. She is the first

mistress, you know, and is just like a mother to us all. But hark, Maggie, don't you hear that lovely singing?"

"Yes: by the sound I think it must be some one in the ruins, or near to them," said Maggie.

"It is a Catholic for certain," whispered Pauline; "listen again, she is now singing a hymn to the Blessed Virgin."

It was a fine still afternoon; not a leaf appeared to be stirring, the sea was like glass, and clear upon the children's ears came those sweet words:

"Mother of Christ, star of the sea,
Pray for the wanderer, pray for me."

Curiosity now rose high. Pauline and Margaret left their rocky seat, and walked in the direction from whence the sounds seemed to come. But they heard no more, and saw no one, excepting a party of ladies and gentlemen, and a gang of gipsies, and they returned home a little disappointed, but full of their adventure.

"It is a ghost," said Beatrice.

"The ghost of a naughty young monk, who would not say his prayers," said Angela.

But this did not satisfy their elder sisters. Lady Myers said there were certainly no Catholics living nearer to them than Southampton; a family had *taken* a detached house, not far off, during the last *week, but* they were Protestants.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

"O Faith! thou workest miracles
Upon the hearts of men;
Choosing thy home in those same hearts
We know not how or when."

F. W. FABER.

Every time the children visited the old abbey they hoped to hear the sweet low voice again, but each time they were disappointed, and all hopes of making the discovery were nearly given up, when one day, as they were walking with Lady Myers and Mrs. Wilmot by the sea-shore, they were greatly surprised to find, seated in their own favourite spot on the rocks, a young girl. Her head was turned away, so she did not perceive them, and presently, to the great delight of the children, they heard the voice once more. The tones were still lower and softer, yet they could distinguish every word of the "Ave Maris Stella" sung in English, but to a chant unknown to them. Not wishing to disturb her, Lady Myers made a sign to the children to pass on.

"Oh, mamma," said Pauline, "will you not ask her her name?"

"No, I cannot do that," said her mother, smiling; "but I think we may be able to discover who she is in another way. A few days ago, when you were all out, Mrs. Wyndham called on me, and brought with her our new neighbour Mrs. Nicholson, and a young lady was with her who, I think, must be your unknown, at least her dress and appearance seem the same. Mrs. Wyndham introduced her, but I could not hear what name she said. I shall return the visit to Mrs. Nicholson soon, and I will take you with me, and Maggie too, if she likes to come."

"Oh, Lady Myers," exclaimed Maggie, "thank you; indeed I should like very much to go, for I am positively burning with curiosity."

The next days were cold and rainy, so Maggie's curiosity had to go on burning for a whole week, but at last it was more than gratified.

One day, when she and Beatrice were busy in their gardens, Lady Myers, with Pauline, called for her to make the longed-for visit. Mrs. Nicholson was at home, and when they were shown into the drawing room, she was seated on a sofa reading, and a young lady (their young lady, the children were sure,) was at a table, finishing a sketch of the abbey. As Lady Myers had already seen her, there were no further introductions, and they were almost in despair of finding out who she was, when, to their immense satisfaction, after they had been in the *room* a few minutes, Mrs. Nicholson asked the children *if* they would not like to go and see some gold

and silver fish, and receiving an answer in the affirmative, she requested her friend to take them into the garden.

"My dear," she said, "take these little girls with you, and show them anything that you think will amuse them."

"How provoking!" thought the children, "why couldn't she call her by her name, instead of saying, 'my dear'?"

Now Maggie Tresham hardly ever kept a middle course; she was always either so desperately shy that she was absolutely speechless, or she was perfectly at her ease. The sight of the beautiful fish sporting about in the clear water drove away the dumb fit, and turning abruptly round, she bluntly put the question at once, "Are you a Catholic?"

The young lady smiled somewhat sadly. "No," she replied, "at least not exactly one."

"I don't quite understand you," said Pauline. "We are Catholics, you know."

"Are you, indeed? Then you will be my friends, will you not?" she asked, eagerly. "How glad I am to have met you."

"We heard you singing in the ruins, and on the beach," said Margaret. "You were singing hymns to the Blessed Virgin, but not to tunes used in Catholic churches, so we could not make it out at all."

"If you will both be very discreet, and keep my secret for a while, I will tell you all about it."

replied their new acquaintance. "You may tell your own friends, but Mrs. Nicholson must know nothing at present."

"We promise you not to tell her," cried Pauline and Margaret.

"Very well, then I will tell you how it is, and I hope it will make you pray for me. I am an orphan. I was about twelve years old when my parents died. My father was a Protestant, my mother a Catholic; but after her marriage she gave up her religion, and my brother and myself were baptized Protestants. I have a Catholic cousin, who came to see my mother on her deathbed. After she died, before he left the house he called us, and said that our dear mother's last wishes were that we should know how deeply she regretted that she had not been faithful to her religion, and that, had she been so, we should have been Catholics. He told us also that my mother expressed her earnest hope that when we were older we would inquire into the truth of the Catholic faith. My father died a short time after my mother, and I was sent to live with my guardian, a Protestant married uncle, who is so bitter in his prejudices against Catholics that he will never allow me to accept my cousin's invitations to his house, though my brother is quite intimate there; and he takes great care that I shall not make any Catholic acquaintances.

"I must tell you that before I left my home for *ever, I found* an old prayer book that had belonged

to my mother; it is called the 'Garden of the Soul.' I have kept it ever since; but it remained locked up in my desk, for I had been taught to despise Papists, and to believe that they are idolators. As I grew older my prejudices strengthened, for I had no one to enlighten me; and once I opened my desk for the purpose of taking the book and throwing it into the fire."

"Did you burn it?" asked Pauline, quickly.

"No; I had too much love for my poor mother; that was my only motive, however, for sparing it then. A few days later a Catholic church near to where we live, was opened. The little town in consequence was filled with visitors; two bishops with several clergymen came; and there was a luncheon in the town hall. This caused a great deal of talk, and I heard the Romish Church again denounced as idolatrous.

"That morning the thought came into my mind to look through the 'Garden of the Soul,' to see if I could find out what was meant. I shut myself up in my room, took the book, and examined it page by page. I need not tell you that I saw that all the beautiful hymns and litanies addressed to the Mother of God and to the saints, only invoked their intercession. 'Pray for us,' I noticed frequently; but nowhere 'Have mercy on us,' as in the prayers to God. One hymn struck me as being particularly beautiful; every verse ends with words similar to these:

'Mother of Christ, star of the sea,
Pray for the wanderer, pray for me.'"

"That is what we heard you singing," cried Margaret, "when you were seated on the rocks, and once in the ruins as well."

"Did you?" said the young girl, blushing. "Those old ruins are generally so quiet at this time of the year, that I thought I was alone; but my own party was not far off.

"When I had looked all through the book, I shut it up again in my desk with feelings about Catholics different from any I had ever had before. 'If it is not true,' I thought, 'that they adore the Virgin, all the other things that are said against them may be false likewise.'

"It happened last winter that we were very uneasy about my brother, who is at sea. We had had no news of him for several months. April came, and still there were no tidings of him, though we had heard of the safe arrival of his ship in a far distant port. My uncle wrote to make inquiries, but in the meantime I was exceedingly anxious.

"One morning, feeling more unhappy than ever, I took a desperate resolution. I opened my desk, got the 'Garden of the Soul,' knelt down, and said over and over again:

'Mother of Christ, star of the sea,
Pray for the wanderer, pray for me.'

"All my scruples about praying to the Blessed Virgin vanished at once. I felt as if I was the poor wanderer who needed prayers. I think it was the gift of faith that I received that morning, for I have never since had any misgivings; and my mind is made up to seek instruction as soon as it is in my power to do so. I cannot describe to you what I felt," said the young girl; "you who have been blessed with the faith from infancy can hardly, I should think, understand what is that sudden light that bursts upon the soul, and dissipates at once every doubt. It forced me to cry out with the poor man in the Gospel: 'I believe: Lord! help Thou my unbelief.' And then that new feeling of deep overpowering love which followed, and which made me again cry out my act of faith, adding: 'Lord, Thou knowest all things: Thou knowest that I desire to love Thee.' But," she added, after a short silence, which neither Pauline nor Margaret seemed inclined to break, so impressed were both with the history they had just heard, "not the least wonderful part of my story comes now. I went into the drawing-room full of my new happiness, and feeling quite like another being, and there on the table was a letter awaiting me from my brother, announcing that he had become a Catholic."

"Oh, how beautiful!" exclaimed Pauline.

"I will give you his letter to read," she continued. "I never in my life felt so deeply my own littleness, and God's greatness and goodness. What infinite

mercy to us both! God knows how weak I am, and that I am not brave enough to stand much battling with my friends; so He made it all so easy for me that I saw my way at once quite clearly. In fact, I have nothing to do but to wait until my brother comes home. I am expecting him in a few days, and then he will advise me how to proceed. In the meantime, keep my secret from Mrs. Nicholson, and pray for me."

"Indeed we will; but may we not know your name?" inquired Pauline.

"Oh, to be sure; I thought you knew it already. My name is Maude Powis."

"Maude Powis!" exclaimed Margaret. "Can it be true? Are you really Maude, Charles's sister, of whom he used so often to speak?"

"Yes; I am indeed Charles Powis's sister. But do you know him?—May I ask *your* name?"

"My name is Margaret Tresham; I am your cousin," said Maggie, much affected.

Maude clasped her in her arms and wept for joy. "Then you must be the daughter of my cousin, who was with my mother on her death-bed!"

"Yes; but papa did not tell us all that. He only said we were always to pray for you and your brother, that you might receive the gift of faith. But tell me, Maude, do you remember on what day you first prayed to the Blessed Virgin?"

"*Oh, yes;* I shall never, never forget it; it will

be one of my red letter days for life; it was the twelfth of last April."

Poor Margaret made no reply. The twelfth of April was no red letter day for her; it was that on which her little brother had died; the morning, too, that Beatrice had said to her, "Let us offer it all up for our Protestant relations." She felt that her prayer had been heard—the sacrifice had been accepted—and Margaret's heart was filled with an affection almost amounting to veneration for her little sister, as well as an overwhelming consciousness of her own inferiority, and with a thankfulness to God too great for words.

The little party had walked on a few steps in silence, when a servant met them, who had been sent to say that Lady Myers was ready to return home.

Pauline told her mother and Mrs. Nicholson that Maude and Maggie had found out that they were cousins, and the visit ended by an invitation to Maude to spend the following day at Carlston Villa, to meet Maggie and Beatrice.

"We have found out the unknown singer; she is our cousin, Maude Powis; she is going to be a Catholic; Charles is already one, and will be in England very soon." These were the words, or rather shouts, that greeted Mrs. Wilmot, and interrupted her in her literary labours, as Margaret dashed through the open French window of the little sitting-room, and seizing Beatrice, gave her such a violent hug that the child was nearly throttled.

"This is indeed a great piece of news," said Mrs. Wilmot, taking off her spectacles; "may God in His goodness be praised for it. Run and take off your hat, Maggie, and then come down and tell us all about it."

Nothing else was talked of at tea but the great event. There can be no doubt that Trissey's young heart bounded with joy and gratitude; but when Maggie, with a faltering voice, told how Maude had felt herself impelled to pray for the first time to the Blessed Virgin on the twelfth of April, she did not dare to raise her eyes, and was terrified lest her sister should relate the circumstances. But Maggie guessed her little sister's feeling, and respected it. Humility, even at that early age, was Beatrice's distinguishing characteristic, and it was all the more beautiful, because she was so completely unconscious that she possessed it. There were no looks of triumph, no proud words, no vain thoughts, such as, "That is my doing. I obtained that grace for Maude; Margaret would not pray, but I did." Such thoughts as these would have deprived her of the merit in God's sight; but happily for Beatrice, she was in the habit of praying to her Guardian Angel, and he was there at her side, shielding her from temptations to vain-glory, and teaching her to give the honour to God, to whom alone it was due.

That evening Maggie wrote a long letter home, telling her parents every circumstance, and in a few days joyful answers arrived from London. There

were letters for Maude from Mr. and Mrs. Tresham, congratulating her in the warmest terms, but at the same time preparing her for many trials, urging her to pray earnestly for the light of the Holy Ghost, and for strength to bear courageously all she might have to endure. Finally, they promised her a happy home and a cordial welcome at Middleford, should her uncle object to her returning to Hartsmoor Park.

There was a letter also for Maggie, containing the good news that Marion being now strong enough to travel, Mr. and Mrs. Tresham were going to take her to Brighton, and they hoped that by the time their brothers came home they would all be able to re-unite at Middleford.

CHAPTER XXII.

WELCOME HOME.

"Welcome home! what purest feeling
Do those simple words impart;
With a thrill of joy appealing
To each true and loving heart.

Ah, the happiness of greeting
Those we've known so long and well;
Sure the joy of such a meeting
Hearts can feel, words cannot tell."

ANON.

On a fine warm evening in the month of August, a post chaise, containing a young lady and gentleman, stopped to change horses at the picturesque little town of Sawlington. Upon the usual question being put: "Where to, sir?" Charles Powis, for it was he, replied: "To Middleford Hall."

Yes, it was indeed true; Charles, whose bright open countenance looked more joyous than ever for being lit up by the faith which now dwelt in his heart, was conducting his dear and only sister to her future home.

But we must explain, and in order to do so, it will be necessary to go back a few weeks. When the "*Albion*" reached Portsmouth, Mr. Powis wrote

an angry letter to his nephew, forbidding him ever again to put his foot in Hartsmoor Park; and furthermore, to secure Maude, as he thought, from his influence, he went at once to Southampton for the purpose of taking her back with him to Lincolnshire. He arrived at Mrs. Nicholson's one evening, when his niece had just returned from a boating excursion with her cousins to the Isle of Wight.

Poor Maude! She loved her uncle and aunt nearly as well as if they had been her father and mother; they had in every respect treated her as their own child. To give them pain, to appear ungrateful, caused her such anguish of mind, that the wicked tempter profited by it. "Give it up," he suggested, "at least for the present; you owe it to your friends: it is wrong to disobey them." But her guardian angel whispered: "God, in His infinite mercy, offers you the precious gift of faith. If you resist the grace now, you will render yourself unworthy to receive it later, and you may lose it altogether. This is not a case when it would be wrong to disobey. God's Church can be but One, and we are bound to seek it, and abandon that which we know to be in error. Others have suffered death rather than lose the faith. Can you be so weak, so cowardly, as to shrink from a few reproaches? Our Blessed Lord was abandoned by His apostles. Can you not bear, for His dear sake, to be neglected; and, if needs be, driven from a happy home as an ungrateful child?"

Maude listened to her good angel, and she said to him: "Stand by me: I can do nothing by myself, but with God's help I can do everything." Then she met her uncle and told him all. She did not speak defiantly, which would not have been right; neither would it have been in accordance with what she felt; but humbly, and trembling with emotion, she told him she was convinced of the truth of the Catholic religion, and wished to belong to it.

Mr. Powis was exceedingly displeased, but he did not for a moment expect resistance when he pointed out what he considered the wickedness of such an act. Very naturally he attributed Maude's resolution to her love for her brother; and vainly did she assure him that her mind had been made up even before she knew anything of Charles's conversion, and at a time when she thought to become a Catholic would estrange him from her for life. In vain she pleaded that she was a Catholic in heart before she had met her cousins or Lady Myers. Her uncle angrily said that she should never see them again, no, nor Charles either, so long as she was under his care.

Mr. Powis had then a short interview with Mrs. Nicholson, who fainted when she heard the news. There was a great commotion in the house that evening, for the report spread from Mrs. Nicholson to the lady's maid, from the lady's maid to the housekeeper, from her to the cook and kitchenmaid, from the kitchenmaid to the butler, from him to the

footman, and in less than a quarter of an hour, the entire household became aware of the startling event.

A post chaise was sent for at once, and heedless of all Maude's entreaties to be allowed to meet her brother at Portsmouth, or even to write him a line, her uncle, with a severity of manner quite unusual to him, drove her off without delay to Lincolnshire.

But "man proposes, and God disposes." Poor Mr. Powis never again saw Hartsmoor, or his wife and children. He had written to Mrs. Powis on Monday, just before starting, saying that he and Maude would be with them on the following Wednesday. But in vain they watched for the travellers: evening and then night came on, and still there was no arrival. The children went to bed unhappy and dispirited; but Mrs. Powis sat up, irresolute how to act. In the morning, however, as there were still no tidings, she made up her mind. She knew the towns through which they would pass, and she determined to start at once and see if anything had happened. Scarcely had she passed the lodge gates when a man on horseback came galloping up. He shouted to the postillion to know if Mrs. Powis was inside the carriage, and receiving for answer that she was, he handed her a letter. It was from Maude, stating that they had reached Northampton on Tuesday evening; but the next morning, on leaving the town, the horses had taken fright at a show in the street, and ran away. They very soon became unmanageable, and the postillion was thrown. On seeing this,

Mr. Powis jumped out of the carriage, intending to try and stop the horses, but he fell, and a wheel went over his head. Some men in the road came at once to their assistance, and the affrighted animals were stopped.

Poor Mr. Powis was carried to the nearest hotel, where he remained in a state of insensibility. The doctors, who were immediately sent for, declared him to be in imminent danger, and recommended Maude, who happily was unhurt, to send an express messenger for his wife. Mrs. Powis, on hearing this intelligence, was almost distracted with grief; she ordered the postillion to drive as fast as possible, and at the first stage took four horses. She arrived at the inn where her husband lay, just in time to receive his last sigh; and a few hours later, Charles, to whom Maude had written, arrived.

The joy of meeting was absorbed in the mutual sorrow of losing an affectionate guardian, and in sympathy for the afflicted widow, whose grief was uncontrollable, the more so as she had little or no religious feeling to support her.

She refused to see her nephew, and would scarcely speak to Maude; so it was a relief to both when her brother-in-law, Mr. George Powis, came to make arrangements for the funeral, and to take her back to Hartsmoor. He told his nephew and niece that he would have nothing to do with either of them if they *persisted* in being Catholics; so the brother and *sister were left* alone at Northampton.

Charles saw that Maude was far from well, and needed a complete change of scene. He therefore wrote to Mr. Tresham, and by his advice he took her abroad for a few weeks; after which, as the young midshipman's leave of absence did not extend beyond the first of September, and as all were anxious to see him at Middleford, it was arranged that he should take his sister there early in August. And now, while they continue their journey from Sawlington, let us take a peep at the young people at Middleford, who were busily preparing for their reception.

It was the vacation. About a fortnight before it commenced Margaret and her sister joined their parents at Brighton; Augustus and Edward had also spent ten days there, and then the whole family returned home.

Marion had grown tall and thin; her round rosy cheeks were gone, and pale and delicate, she was still a source of great anxiety, and needed all the loving care that was lavished upon her. Rescued as it were from the brink of the grave, this patient enduring little child became every one's darling. But the void in the nursery was so great, so painful, that at Mrs. Smeakle's request the room was changed; with tears in her eyes she said she "couldn't bear it; no, that she couldn't, now that Master Ally was gone." Good and faithful Smeakle! her affection for all her mistress's children was unbounded, and she would have laid down her life for any one of them.

It is a common complaint now-a-days that servants do not get attached to their employers. It may probably be true in many cases, but there was no such cry raised thirty or forty years ago. And wherefore the reason? why the change? Whose fault is it, the servants' or their masters'? Possibly there may be fault on both sides. The railroad and the penny post have certainly done much towards destroying that beautiful simplicity of manner, and respect for superiors, that were noticeable formerly in the English peasantry and villagers.

But the rich too are changed. There is no longer the same feeling for servants which used to exist. Some are intent on their own pleasures, and seem to forget that they are responsible for the comfort and happiness of their dependants. They show no interest in their joys or sorrows, and if they get ill, or meet with an accident, they send them off to the hospital, or to their poverty-stricken homes, engage others, and think no more of those who have been overtaken with sickness in their service. They make no inquiries, and take no interest in their recovery. Is it wonderful, then, that the gratitude that is in men's hearts lies latent? It is there assuredly, but it needs something to call it forth. God grant that it may not become extinct through the fault of those on whom depend the happiness and well-being of households. There are some bright *exceptions* to this rule; many families still exist *where the mistress* is a mother to her servants. If

they are in trouble she tries to console them; if they are sick she cares for them, visits them, and considers it a duty to see that they are kindly nursed, and have everything needful. Nay, there are a few—would that there were many!—who assist in the nursing of their sick dependants themselves, watch by them at night, and, above all, see that they have every spiritual help and consolation. Ask these, and they will tell you that gratitude still lives. Ask their servants, and they will tell you of their undying attachment to their masters and mistresses.

My young friends must pardon me this digression, and when they are grown up, and have households of their own, it is to be hoped that they will not forget that servants have hearts at least as warm as theirs, and that kindness and sympathy shown to them while they are in service, and afterwards if they deserve it, is never forgotten. It may possibly be that an isolated case of ingratitude occurs here and there, but if we would only try to remember that it is God whom we serve in the person of the poor or suffering, we should go on courageously doing our duty, and not shrink from it because we do not receive that thankfulness which we consider our due.

But to return to our story. Augustus and Edward were now thirteen and fourteen years of age, and were growing up the pride and joy of their parents. Full of fun and mischief they were, yet both

were truly good boys. No matter what happened, they never allowed any amusement to interfere with their religious duties, and every day without fail they recited the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin, and at least two decades of the Rosary.

"Nearly all the fellows say it at our college," said Augustus, one day, to some one who expressed surprise. "We recite it walking up and down, in batches of three or four during play time."

These two brothers would sacrifice any pleasure to amuse their little sister Marion. The doctors had said that she was not to apply to study for several months; but the time was not altogether lost, for she was an intelligent child, and very fond of reading. Her mother supplied her with plenty of nice books, and amongst others with all "Peter Parley's Tales for Children." In one of these interesting volumes there was a description of an Indian wigwam, and a woodcut of the same. Marion one day told her brothers how much she would like to have one herself to sit in and read out of doors, so they determined to try and build one for her. Permission was easily obtained, and they only waited for Charles to come to begin the work under his direction.

Mr. and Mrs. Tresham wished to make the young orphans feel that they were coming to a home, and so they prepared for them a hearty welcome. *Markwell* the carpenter was sent for to erect an *arch just* within the lodge gates, on which Mrs.

Carrington helped the children to form the word "Welcome," in scarlet and white dahlias. She traced the letters on green calico, and showed them how to stitch on the flowers. The boys made wreaths of ivy, which were entwined round the pillars of the porch, while little Marion was busy with her mother, cutting out flags, and fringing them with coloured paper to make them look gay. Each of the children was to have a flag, on which to write some device. Augustus printed on his: "Hurrah for our cousins!" Neddie wrote, "Long live Charles and Maude!" Maggie's choice was "Hymns in old Netley for ever!" and Beatrice's and Marion's together, "A hundred thousand welcomes." These flags were fastened in the ivy wreaths at different places, and towards evening a coloured illumination of the letters C. and M. was lit up.

Augustus and Edward had just put the finishing stroke to the decorations of the arch, when the chaise was seen approaching. They ran breathless to the house with a cry of "They're coming! they're coming!" An old Welsh harper, engaged for the day, struck up a joyous air in the hall, and the whole family went to the door to meet the travellers. Tears glistened in Charles's eyes, and Maude could only kiss them all in silence, so overcome were both at such unexpected demonstrations of gladness on their arrival. Mrs. Tresham took her cousin to the pretty little room allotted to her,

affectionately telling her that she hoped to be a mother to her through life.

Maude had not yet been received into the Church. She had read a great deal, and inquired much of her brother; she had also seen and enjoyed the services of the Church abroad. Her mind was quite satisfied, and she only waited to be quiet at Middleford in order to place herself under instructions.

The rest of the evening passed pleasantly away; Charles's exuberant spirits recovered themselves at the cheerful dinner table; while Maude, joining in the lively chat, felt perfectly at home, and before going to bed told her brother that she was "So happy, O so very happy."

CHAPTER XXIII.

CHARLES'S CONVERSION.

"O gift of gifts! O grace of Faith!
My God! how can it be
That Thou who hast discerning love
Shouldst give that gift to me?

Thy choice, O God of Goodness! then
I lovingly adore;
O give me grace to keep Thy grace,
And grace to merit more."

F. W. FABER.

"It is raining too hard to go out, Charles," said Augustus, the next morning after breakfast; "so will you please tell us all about your conversion?"

"Oh yes," chimed in Neddie, "I want to know when you first thought of becoming a Catholic."

"But if I can't tell you?" said Charles, laughing. "Suppose it is so long ago that I cannot even trace all my thoughts about it?"

"Surely," said Beatrice, "you were not thinking of it when you were at Mr. Tweedle's school?"

"Perhaps I was though, Trissey; but my ideas had not taken a shape, and I can scarcely describe them. You see, I could not come in and out of this house as I did, like a tame cat, and not observe

that your father and mother make religion the mainspring of all their actions. Your friend, the Rev. Mr. Jackson, is very kind and warm-hearted, but he has no religion; he is good to every one, partly because he is benevolent, and partly because he owes it to society, but he preaches no higher motive. At the same time I saw that here it is all so different; your parents set you a bright example of acting for God alone, and you are taught that, in order to make a benevolent action of any value, we must do it for our Blessed Lord's sake. Now, all that sort of thing made me think that religion is good, and raises a man above himself. I did not ask any questions, because I knew the conditions upon which I was allowed by my guardians to visit here; but I candidly tell you that the prejudices in which I had been brought up wore away by degrees; and I often hoped I should die a Catholic; nay, I prayed frequently that your father might be my guide through life."

"But," said Marion, "were you not in the wild, savage countries when you made up your mind?"

"Well, Marion," replied Charles, laughing, "I was in a country where there are certainly some savages—wild men of the woods, eh?—but civilization flourishes there, nevertheless; and I will tell you what really did rouse me up and bring me to the point.

"*The Albion* was stationed at one of our finest *colonial* seaport towns. It is pleasantly situated on

a beautiful harbour, and has some handsome Catholic churches. One evening the cathedral took fire and was burnt to the ground. It was a fearful scene, and the grief of the people brought vividly to my mind the description in 'Josephus' of the wailing of the Jews over Jerusalem. There were old men and women weeping and calling out: 'Save our church! —save St. Mary's!' Many were striking their breasts, and saying that it was their sins that had brought down the anger of God upon them. The flames rose higher and higher, and lit up those sorrow-stricken faces; while every one that could, was lending a helping hand to stay the work of destruction.

"But suddenly there was a hush; a path was instantaneously cleared through the crowd, and every knee was bent to receive the blessing of the venerable Archbishop, as he approached the blazing edifice, supported by two of his clergy. He is a very fine old man, and has one of the most pleasing and amiable countenances I ever saw. Tears rolled down his careworn cheeks as he gazed upon the dreadful scene. The instant he appeared there was silence, for all respected his grief. But presently some one brought him a seat, and this was a signal for the most touching scene I have ever witnessed, the more so as it had not been in the least premeditated, but was the spontaneous act of the moment. Purse after purse was thrown into the lap of the venerable old man: 'Take it, my lord, take it; and if it were my last farthing you should have it;' I heard one poor

ragged cripple say. And a barefooted old woman came up with a stocking full of money; her savings for the last twenty years, (as I afterwards learnt,) that she might return to the 'auld country' and die.

"'I can't,—I can't take it,' said the Archbishop, sobbing like a child; 'give it back to her.'

"'Shure, and my lord,' said the poor good creature, who evidently came from the *green isle*, 'shure, and you never were hardhearted in your whole life before, and you won't begin now, when we are all in such trouble. Shure, and I'll never touch a penny of the money in my life, so you'll not be refusing it.'

"The stocking and its contents were accepted, and the old woman went away content.

"I could give you many more instances of the beautiful faith of the people, and the sacrifices that the poorest of them made to have their dear cathedral built up again. The collection made that evening, unasked for as it was, amounted to a large sum, more than sufficient for the erection of a temporary building.

"But you will say, perhaps, 'Well, cousin Charles, that's all very nice, and very edifying, but what has it to do with your conversion?'

"Well, it had to do with it in this way. I had no doubts of faith, but I was lazy, and wanted something to stir me up from my apathy and indecision; or perhaps, to speak more correctly, I was trifling *with grace*. But now I was effectually roused. I *said to* myself, this must be the true religion, that

can draw forth such noble sacrifices,—where else should I see the same generosity, or such depth of faith as that which these poor people show? I delayed no longer. The next morning I called on the Archbishop, who received me most kindly; and when I told him my story, and my wish to enter the Church, he was quite overcome. He thanked Almighty God over and over again most fervently; and said, that not only did my conversion take away all the bitterness of his grief, but that he rejoiced with all his heart, if the burning church had been the means of bringing one soul to the true faith. He kindly offered to instruct me himself; and I made my abjuration on All Saints. There," continued Charles, "now I have told you all about it; and while I have been talking, the weather has been clearing, so let us be off for a walk; I want to visit all the old places, and, besides that, we have Marion's wigwam to look after."

The children thanked their cousin for the interesting account of his conversion, and in a short time had shown him half-a-dozen different spots that were considered more or less desirable sites for the log hut; but the one they seemed to have set their hearts on, was the little island on the pond.

"Don't you see," said Augustus, "we could row Marion across every morning after breakfast, and come for her again when she is tired."

"It would look so exactly like Robinson Crusoe," pleaded Neddie.

Mr. Tresham, who had joined the consultation, smiled, for he did not see much resemblance to that worthy in the frail child by his side. He thought, moreover, that the island would be damp, and that her mother would prefer terra-firma, so this idea was at once abandoned, and a pleasant nook was chosen by Mr. Tresham, shaded by lilac and laburnum trees, near their own little gardens, and not far from the house. The requisite logs were found, and with Charles's help the wigwam was soon built. The gardener planted some roses and clematis to climb all over it, and made a pretty rustic armchair for Marion, as well as a bench for her visitors. Here the little child spent hours, reading her favourite "Peter Parley's Tales," and other amusing and instructive books, while her brothers and sisters took walks, or played at games in which she was still too delicate to join.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

"Christ to the young man said: 'Yet one thing more;
If thou wouldst perfect be,
Sell all thou hast, and give it to the poor,
And come and follow Me!'"—LONGFELLOW.

The month of August passed rapidly away, too rapidly, thought all the inmates of Middleford Hall, for at its close there was to be a great break up of the family circle. On the twenty-eighth, Charles returned to his ship, which soon afterwards sailed for South America. With many regrets he took leave of his cousins and sister; but his grief was not unmixed with joy to think he was leaving her so happy and so beloved.

A few days after his departure "Black Monday" came round again; but this time Margaret was not left behind. Sorrowfully she left her peaceful home, and parted for the first time in her life from Beatrice, whose feelings were deep, though she seldom showed their intensity. Mrs. Carrington and Maude, in the most affectionate manner possible, did all in their power to console and amuse both her and Marion, during their parents' absence.

The first day's journey was made altogether, and

then Mr. Tresham, with his boys, took the coach for Cosgrove College; while Mrs. Tresham drove on with Margaret to the convent where she herself had been educated. It was pleasantly situated in extensive grounds; and as they entered the long avenue, Margaret noticed that her mother seemed to know and love every tree by which they passed. It was her first visit since her marriage, and Mrs. Tresham was indeed truly delighted to meet once more the friends and guides of her happy convent days. But her child's sensations were various; she had never in her life seen nuns, and the picture she had drawn in her imagination was rather peculiar. She fancied they were all pale and thin, with long serious faces, and that their eyes were always lifted up as saints are sometimes represented in pictures. Judge, then, of her agreeable surprise when Mother Xaveria entered the room, radiant with happiness, and her whole countenance beaming with smiles, that once seen could never be forgotten. Her welcome was so cordial and so motherly, that Margaret felt she could love her at once. In a few minutes the Superioress came in and welcomed them with open arms. She was a dear, kind old lady, who had been at the head of the school when Mrs. Tresham was a pupil. After chatting pleasantly for about a quarter of an hour, they led the way to the schoolrooms, which Mrs. Tresham wished to see. It happened to be the *hour of* recreation, and, in passing through the long *corridors*, they came to the door of the workroom,

which the Reverend Mother opened, and took them in. Here Margaret saw about thirty nuns assembled together, talking cheerfully, and busy with needlework of all kinds, from rich church embroidery down to patchwork counterpanes, and comforters for the poor. It amused her to see how her mother became almost like a child again amongst all her old friends. The Reverend Mother's younger sister, and Mother Xaveria's sister, had been Mrs. Tresham's companions at school, and the meeting was mutually affectionate. They all looked so cheerful and so glad to have her daughter under their care. Then, by-and-bye, the good lay-sisters came in, and surrounded Mrs. Tresham, calling her their dear Miss Mary Dudley, and Margaret laughed outright. Some old faces were missing, and there were many new ones; but all seemed pleased to see them, and promised to love Maggie for her mother's sake. After an agreeable half hour, the Reverend Mother took them to the school, where Pauline Myers was impatiently waiting for her friends. She ran up to them looking so well and happy; and Mrs. Tresham left Maggie with her for a short time, to make acquaintance with her new companions, while she had a chat with Mother Xaveria. What struck Margaret more than anything was the total absence of stiffness in the nuns' intercourse with the children; and though she could not perhaps explain her ideas, she understood that they were governed by love and not by fear. Some of the girls were busy in their playground;

and Sister Angela astonished Margaret by saying she hoped she liked playing at games, and by asking if she had brought a spade and rake for her little garden. Altogether there seemed to be a homelike spirit, and Maggie was pleased. Her mother had no fears for her happiness, and was glad to find that her first impressions were so favourable.

But the time for separation came. After one short hour spent alone with her darling, Mrs. Tresham tore herself away, leaving Margaret under the care of her dear friend Mother Xaveria. Pauline Myers did everything in her power to cheer her, and became her best-loved companion, and her true friend. For some time, however, Margaret was inconsolable. This parting from her mother seemed to renew and open afresh the but partially healed sorrows; while to Mrs. Tresham herself, the sacrifice was equally great.

Three months passed away, during which time Maude Powis prepared very carefully for her reception into the Church, which took place on the festival of the Immaculate Conception; and with a heart glowing with love and gratitude she made her first Communion on Christmas Day.

One morning in the month of February, two letters containing joyful news reached Middleford. One was from Charles to his sister, announcing his determination to leave the navy, and return home as *soon as possible*, to study for the Church. Maude's *joy was indescribable*; and her first thought was to

hasten to the little chapel, and offer her heartfelt thanks to God. To have a brother a priest would complete her happiness; and her cousins congratulated her in the most affectionate manner; while Mrs. Smeakle kept saying: "Didn't I tell you so, Miss Beatrice? The first time I saw Master Charles, I said to Mrs. Dimblebee: As sure as you're alive, Mrs. Dimblebee, that young gentleman will be a Catholic priest; I know it by the tone of his voice, and the way he puts on his hat." The second letter was from Margaret, to tell her parents that, on Maundy Thursday, she hoped to have the happiness of making her first Communion. That year the day fell on the twelfth of April, little Ally's anniversary. At first Margaret would have wished it otherwise, but at last she felt glad that it was so; and when that happiest day of her life came, she indulged the thought that her little brother's bright spirit was amongst the angels who, that morning, invisibly accompanied our divine Lord, when, at the voice of the priest, He came down on to the altar and gave Himself to her for the first time, on the same day, and almost at the same hour that, the year before, Almighty God had called the innocent child to be His for ever.

And here let us pause. Before many years had passed, another and still deeper grief befell the Tresham family, of which I will spare my young readers the recital. I will only add, in the words of the poet:

"All are scattered now and fled;
Some are married, some are dead;
And when I ask, with throbs of pain:
'Ah! when shall they all meet again?'
As in the days long-since gone by,
The ancient timepiece makes reply,—
'For ever—never!
Never—for ever!'

Never here; for ever there,
Where all parting, pain and care,
And death and time shall disappear,—
For ever there, but never here!
The horologe of eternity
Sayeth this incessantly:—
'For ever—never!
Never—for ever.'"—LONGFELLOW.

THE END.

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